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Facing the Future

Four Essays on the Social Relevance
of Buddhism

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A Buddhist Social Ethic for the New Century

The arrival of a new century is always a time of great ferment and great expectations, and when the new century also marks the dawn of a new millennium our expectations are likely to be especially intense. An inherent optimism makes us think that the new is always bound to be better than the old, that the arrival of the next year or century will inevitably bring our wildest dreams to fulfilment. Unfortunately, however, life is not so simple that the mere ticking of the clock and a change of calendars are enough to undo the knots with which we have tied ourselves up by our rash decisions and ill-considered actions through all the preceding months, years, and decades.

One fact that past experience should deeply impress on us is the need to look carefully beneath the surface of events for hidden tendencies that portend future harm. The importance of this guideline is brought home for us by reflection on the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In the Western world the end of the nineteenth century was a period of fervent optimism, of utopian dreams quickened by an unflinching faith in a glorified ideal called progress. The twin leaders of the cult of progress were science and technology. Science was the new Prometheus, an unstoppable Prometheus that had snatched nature's hidden secrets and passed them on to a humanity brimming over with ardent hopes. In each decade, one major breakthrough

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in knowledge followed another, each fresh theoretical advance being matched by corresponding success in harnessing nature's powers to our needs. The result was a tremendous surge in the growth of technology that promised to liberate humankind from its most stubborn historical limitations.

The next century showed just how shortsighted this optimism really was. Indeed, for those who looked deeply enough, the seeds of destruction were already visible right beneath the feet of the proud conquistadors. They could be seen on the home front, in the miserable lives of millions of workers condemned to degrading toil in the factories, mines, and sweatshops; in the ruthless colonization of the non-Western world, the rape of its resources and subjugation of its peoples; in the mounting friction and tensions between ambitious empires competing for global domination. During the first half of the twentieth century the tensions exploded twice, in two world wars with a death count of many millions. These wars, and the ensuing cold war, brought into the open the dark primordial forces that had long been simmering just a little beneath the polished veneer of Western civilization. It is surely significant that our discovery of nature's most arcane secret – the convertibility of matter and energy – conferred on us the capacity for total self-annihilation: unlimited power and total destruction arriving in the same package.

Today, as we stand at the beginning of the twenty-first century, our world has become a living paradox. It is a world of immense wealth, but also of grinding poverty where 1.3 billion people – a quarter of the world's population – live in constant want. A world of tremendous advances in medicine and health care, where eleven million people die annually from diseases that are easily treatable. A world where the

daily trade in lethal weapons numbers in the millions of dollars, yet where seven million children die of hunger each year and 800 million people are severely undernourished. And perhaps most alarming of all, a world bent on unlimited economic growth on a planet whose finite resources are rapidly dwindling. Thus, with all our bold strides towards the future, our world still suffers from painful wounds, and the need for a solution, for a cure, has become ever more insistent if humanity is to survive intact through to the end of the new century.

In the course of this paper I wish to formulate a Theravada Buddhist response to the need to heal the wounds of the world. In popular textbooks on world religions, Theravada Buddhism is generally depicted as a religion of individual salvation which holds up as its ideal a purely private enlightenment to be reached through renunciation and meditation. Though Theravada Buddhism does stress the inescapably personal nature of the ultimate goal, if we carefully examine the suttas or discourses of the Buddha, we would see that the Buddha was keenly aware of the problems human beings face in the social dimensions of their lives, and he formulated his teaching to address these problems just as much as to show the way to final liberation. Although these texts are nowhere as numerous as those dealing with personal ethics, meditation, and philosophical insight, they remain remarkable testimonials to the clear sociological acumen of the Awakened One. Even today they still offer clear-cut practical guidelines in devising a social ethic capable of addressing the problems peculiar to the present age.

The first principle that the Buddha's teaching gives us in responding to these problems is a methodological one: not to rush to foredrawn conclusions but to investigate the under-

lying causes at all levels, and not to stop until we have reached the deepest roots. The common tendency today, however, in tackling social problems is quite different. Particularly in political and economic circles, obstinate human dilemmas with subterranean roots are treated simply as technical snags that can be resolved merely by the application of the right technical solution. Thus, it is held, to counter the danger of global warming we must hammer out a treaty on reducing emissions of greenhouse gases; if crime and violence are on the increase, we need a larger and tougher police force; if drug addiction has reached alarming proportions among our youth, we need more effective controls against drug trafficking. Such measures may indeed be expedient safeguards against the grosser manifestations of the problems they are intended to rectify, but however effective and efficient they may be in the short run, on their own they do not provide long-term solutions. What they offer is cosmetic treatment, stopgap measures that should not be taken as substitutes for alternatives that operate at the level of the deeper root-causes.

When we adopt a Buddhist perspective on the wounds that afflict our world today, we soon realize that these wounds are symptomatic: a warning signal that something is fundamentally awry with the way we lead our lives. We would see these outer wounds as outgrowths of a more malignant wound hidden deep within, eating away at our vital strength and discharging its venom into our air, rivers, and oceans; into our forests and farmlands; into our family lives and homes; into our social relationships and political agendas. Thus, from the Buddhist point of view, what we really need to heal our common wounds is radical surgery, a far-reaching change in our collective views, attitudes, and lifestyles.

The word that enjoys currency these days as an expres-

sion for our need is "values." We are told that the reason social conditions have degenerated so widely is because people have abandoned traditional values, and all we need to solve our problems is a revival of those values. While such a recommendation can stir up waves of nostalgia in those disturbed by the spread of moral disorder, we must bear in mind that the mere call for a revival of traditional values will be utterly ineffective unless we are prepared to make some bold changes in the foundation on which values rest, namely, the aims, purposes, and sense of meaning that determine the social dimension of our existence. To attempt to revive private values in a corrupt and degrading society is like trying to beautify a chemical dump by planting roses along the banks: as long as the dump remains, the roses will only grow up stunted and deformed.

The transformation we need has to go further than the merely personal. It must embrace both aspects of our existence, the internal and the external, the personal and the social. These two dimensions of our lives are inseparably intertwined and mutually conditioning, so that our values reflect social and economic realities, while social and economic realities are shaped by our values. Thus, while it is in our personal lives that we have the most power to instigate direct change, any alternations in our personal lifestyles must also reach outwards and exercise an impact on our interpersonal relations, our social order, our political agenda, and our relationship to the natural environment. To avoid turning personal values into a lovely facade covering up social disorder and decay, critical and even painful self-examination is essential. We must be ready to examine with complete honesty our own priorities and to see the dangers for ourselves and others in letting ourselves drift along with the current of

egotism and selfishness that sweeps across the world. Without such honest self-criticism, any cry for a recovery of values, even Buddhist values, is bound to end in little more than pious platitudes – personally consoling, perhaps, but powerless to bring effective change.

When we set out to diagnose our global problems from a Buddhist perspective, we should recognize that an adequate diagnosis must take account of multiple levels of causality. One of the Buddha's most striking insights is that phenomena do not arise from a single cause but from a complex concurrence of many conditions operating at different levels. Whereas specialist studies deal with problems from within a closed and narrow frame of reference, a Buddhist approach would adopt a comprehensive point of view that takes account of many levels of causation, which criss-cross and overlap, reinforcing each other at various turns. This allows for a more comprehensive solution, for when problems are approached from a limited frame of reference, the angle taken in viewing the problems already implies the solution. It is only when this "wide angle" perspective is adopted that we can grasp the various dimensions in which the problem projects itself, and thereby we can see the multitude of factors that must be addressed in drawing up a solution.

We also have to give heed to the "specific gravity" of the different types of causation, that is, to the relative contribution they make to the problem as a whole. According to the Buddha the most powerful and weighty causal factor operative in human life is the mind. Though the mind is invisible, intangible, weightless, and dimensionless, it is the hidden vector behind all the other modes of causality – social, political, and economic. The mind does not operate in a vacuum, however: inevitably, it is always embedded in a specific his-

torical and personal context, subject to the impact of a wide variety of influences which shape its perspectives and determine its dispositions. But while this is so, we must also note that all these other factors influencing the mind are at some level themselves manifestations of mental activity. Thus the other orders of causality affecting the mind – social, economic, cultural, and political – can in turn be considered objectifications of mind, embodying and “externalizing” specific attitudes, views, and psychological agendas. For this reason the Buddha says that “all conditions are preceded by the mind, dominated by the mind, fashioned by the mind” (Dhammapada, vv. 1–2).

When we recognize the enormous contribution the mind makes to every other level of causality, we can see at once that in order to heal the wounds that afflict our world today our most urgent task is to heal the wounds in our minds. Down the centuries, especially since the start of the Scientific Revolution in the West, we have been obsessed with the challenge of extending our control and mastery over the external world, but in our enthusiasm to master the outer world and exploit it for our material ends, we have neglected an even more vital dimension of our being, namely, our own minds.

For this reason our triumphs in scientific knowledge and technology have been painfully lopsided. While we have made astounding strides in understanding the world, we have made very little progress in understanding ourselves; while we have tapped the hidden powers of nature and made them our servants, we have done very little to tame the controller of nature. For just this reason, our proud triumphs in science and technology have had a very mixed impact on humanity as a whole. Along with their unquestionable material bless-

ings, they have brought devastation and deprivation, waste and carnage, impoverishment and misery for many millions.

The basic needs of human beings are really very simple, and in principle they should be easily met in ample measure for everyone. They include an acceptable standard of material security, fresh air and clean water, nourishing food, comfortable housing, medical care, education and information, and sufficient leisure to develop one's talents and faculties. Under the present system, however, a tiny percentage of people, hardly more than a handful, live in greater luxury than the emperors of ancient Rome, while over a billion people, a quarter of the world's population, are condemned to live below the poverty line. Isn't it ironic that while we can send out spacecraft to distant planets and manipulate them with hairpin accuracy, we still cannot feed all the world's children? Isn't it alarming that while all indicators point to the massive threat to health and life from escalating pollution, unprecedented climate change, and the depletion of our natural resources, the nations most responsible for this crisis insist on pursuing unchecked their wasteful, exorbitant lifestyles? What prevents us from meeting the basic needs of all people on earth is not a scarcity of means but a failure of will, a failure rooted in selfishness and greed.

In the Buddha's teaching, the dark forces of the mind responsible for human suffering are called the defilements (*kilesa*), of which the most powerful are the three "unwholesome roots" – greed, hatred, and delusion. In its classical expression, the Buddha's teaching focuses upon the role of the defilements in our personal lives, showing how they are the determinants of psychological and existential suffering. Today, however, as our world has become tightly integrated into a single global order, a shift in emphasis is necessary if

we are to analyse and address our common plight. Since institutions and organizations have become ever more influential in moulding our circumstances and determining our destiny, we must closely investigate how the defilements assume a collective expression. We must lay bare the detrimental impact of our economic and political structures and discover how our forms of social organization, both national and international, sustain the grip of greed, hatred, and delusion upon our minds. For these structures do not merely objectify the mind's defilements; they also reinforce those defilements and make their grip ever more difficult to cast off. By powerful strategies often hidden by camouflage and deceit, they nurture and support the mass of distorted views, unhealthy attitudes, and risky policies that wreak so much havoc in our societies and our lives.

Perhaps the most glaring example of this destructive potential in the last decade of the twentieth century is the unregulated free-market economic system, which today has acquired a global reach. The massive transnational corporations that dominate this economic order, driven by the quest for commercial profit, have turned into institutional embodiments of greed. Despite their impressive public-relations propaganda, their fundamental purpose is not to meet genuine human needs but to generate maximum profit at minimum cost. Profit is the fuel of corporate growth, and every profit target met generates only a still higher target; the ideal is never a state of stable equilibrium, but the achievement of limitless profit at zero cost.

For the commanders of the corporate culture nothing else ultimately matters but economic success. Carefully documented studies have shown that in the pursuit of greater financial gain the corporations are quite prepared to jeop-

ardize the welfare of the work force, the health of the customers, the stability of the society, traditional norms and values, the harmony of the community, and the sustainability of the natural environment. In their view, if the net result is a larger profit margin, all these can be sacrificed with barely a shrug of the shoulders.

The corporate economy is not only driven by its own inherent greed but its very success depends on arousing greed in others. For a company to sell its products, to grow and expand, it has to induce in others a desire to buy these products, and to the extent that these products do not meet genuine human needs (which is often the case) the desires must be provoked by deliberate strategies. Hence the twin disciplines of market research and advertising, which exploit every means available to push their clients' products. Television and radio, signboard and newspaper, pictures and jingles, slogans and songs, all are to be used to hammer home the message: "Buy this, buy that." The psychological sophistication that underlies the advertisement industry is astounding. There is hardly a human weakness it hesitates to play upon to promote sales: sexual attraction and status, pride and cupidity, fear and worry, arrogance and vanity – all are fair game in the drive to boost up profits.

Behind the specific advertising appeals there lies a more general assumption, an assumption never explicitly proposed but made absolutely compelling through countless images and slogans. This is the idea that consumption is the key to happiness. We are made to believe that the way to become happy is to indulge our desires. Happiness is identified with the acquisition of wealth and the enjoyment of commodities, and the more costly and luxurious the goods, the more lavish is the promise of happiness. In the consumerist vision

the enjoyment of goods is nothing less than The Good, the final, all-sufficient goal of human life.

If we use the Buddha's teachings as a lens to examine the corporate economic system and its offshoot, the consumerist culture, we will see that it is ultimately detrimental to the well-being of both its masters and servants alike. Drawing upon the tools of Buddhist analysis, let us briefly sketch the inner dynamics of this system. We see in the first instance that such a social order is founded upon ignorance or delusion (*avijjā, moha*), namely, the supposition that material wealth and consumption are the criteria of the good life. According to the Buddhist texts, when ignorance infiltrates our cognitive systems it issues in a series of "distortions" (*vipallāsa*) which infect our perception (*saññā*), thinking (*citta*), and views (*diṭṭhi*). The Buddha mentions four such distortions: the notions that the impermanent is permanent, that the painful (or suffering) is pleasant, that the insubstantial is a self, and that the unbeautiful is beautiful. At the most basic level we *perceive* things by way of these distortions; when these distorted perceptions are taken up for reflection, we start *thinking* in terms of them; and finally, under the combined influence of distorted perception and thought, we adopt *views* – that is, beliefs, doctrines, and ideologies – that affirm the mistaken notions of permanence, pleasure, selfhood, and beauty.

In modern commercial culture these distortions – conceptual manifestations of ignorance – dominate the thinking, attitudes, principles, and policy lines of both producers and consumers alike. The illusions of permanence, pleasure, self, and beauty are sustained by the images that have become such an intimate part of our lives: the happy family using a particular brand of soap, the beautiful woman standing be-

side the latest model car, the rugged cattle man smoking this particular brand of cigarettes, the self-assured executive drinking that particular brand of whisky. The inevitable outcome of this commercially aggressive campaign is the exaltation of craving and greed as the fuel of social and economic activity. In free-market economics, production is not geared towards the satisfaction of real need but towards the enhancement of commercial profit, which means that human desires must be subtly manipulated and expanded in a bid to enhance profits.

In subservience to the internal demands of this system, the elementary need for material sustenance, for the basic requisites of life, becomes blown up into an insatiable urge for status, power, and luxury. The masters of commerce strive to create in us a perpetual discontent, to induce feelings of inadequacy, to stir up the need to purchase more. As a result, envy and resentment replace contentment; titillation replaces satisfaction; prestige value eclipses life value. The one word to be banished from the dictionaries is "enough." For the corporate-based economy to flourish there must never be enough, but always a thirst for more: for the bigger, faster, and better; for novelty and variety.

In a newly affluent society perhaps the segment of the population most vulnerable to the tactics of commercial advertising is the youth. The promoters of consumerism know this well. They know how to capitalize on the tender psychological needs of the young – their rebelliousness and audacity, their compulsions and anxieties – and on the basis of this understanding they attempt to create a specific culture of youth that attaches prestige and prominence to the appropriate commodities. They also know how to control fashions and styles, to make the acquisition of replacements a recurring demand that triggers off regular sprees of buying. For

religious cultures that thrive on such traditional values as simplicity, contentment, and self-control, the impact of the global corporate culture can be traumatic, rupturing the life-line that sustains the transmission of traditional values from one generation to the next.

In sum, the glorification of the profit motive gives rise to a social order in which the underlying springs of social activity are the twin defilements of ignorance and craving. The experts who defend this system, the advocates of free trade and globalization, tell us that the unrestrained functioning of the economy is the precondition for general human happiness, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." But what the Buddha teaches is just the opposite. In a social order governed by ignorance and craving, in which greed, reckless growth, and competition are the spurs to mass-scale human activity, the inevitable outcome has to be suffering and conflict. In the formula of the Four Noble Truths we find this expressed in psychological terms: "Craving is the origin of suffering." Elsewhere the Buddha has made the same point with specific reference to the breakdown of social cohesion: "From craving comes the search for profit, from seeking comes the gain of profit, from gain comes discrimination, thence comes desire and lust, thence attachment, thence possessiveness, thence selfishness, thence hoarding; and from hoarding come many evil unwholesome things, such as the taking up of clubs and knives, quarrels, conflicts, and disputes; recrimination, slander, and falsehood" (Mahānidāna Sutta).

Ironically, the linking together of the world's population in the globalized economy is accompanied by a progressive atomization of individuals which undermines their ability to function as cooperative, responsible members of their societies. This happens because the ultimate effect of corporate

culture is to reduce the person to a mere consumer whose whole being centres on intensity and variety of private experience. In subtle ways that operate below the threshold of perception, the consumerist conception of the good life cuts away at the bonds of community that unite the members of a social order into a unified whole. By appealing to those values that inflame egotism and selfish interest, it replaces social cohesion with a social atomism that locks each individual into a self-enclosed world of his or her own private concerns. The union of autonomous, responsible, disciplined individuals essential to a true community gives way to a "culture of narcissism" in which each person is obsessed with maximizing his or her own status, wealth, position, and power – the outward signs of material success. If we are puzzled why social discipline and responsibility have become so rare today, reflection on the above may provide an answer.

In such a culture as we find in the "developed" countries of the West, it is hardly surprising that the most basic unit of social formation, the family, has been virtually rent asunder. In the United States, the pioneer in establishing the "new world order," roughly half the marriages end prematurely in divorce and almost fifty percent of American children grow up in one-parent homes. Even when family bonds endure, the atmosphere of family life has drastically changed from what it used to be in the past. No longer is the family a close harmonious unit held together by ties of love, respect, self-sacrifice, and cooperation. Instead it has become a symbiotic pact, a union of convenience, in which each member seeks his or her personal advantage, often by exploiting and hurting the other members.

Earlier we saw that the internal dynamics of consumerist culture begin with ignorance or delusion, the assumption that

happiness can be achieved through acquisitiveness and the enjoyment of goods. This belief conditions craving, the desire to acquire and enjoy, and the ultimate outcome is frustration, competitiveness, and conflict; in short, personal and collective suffering. In a social order governed by the Dhamma – and I use this word here not with narrow reference to Buddhism, but more broadly to signify the universal law of righteousness and truth – the inner dynamics would be the diametric opposite of the one governing the consumerist model. In a righteous society the role played by ignorance will be exercised by knowledge or wisdom, a basic shared understanding of the fundamental laws of wholesome living. In a predominantly Buddhist society this would include the law of kamma and its fruit, the benefits of generosity and ethical conduct, and some insight into the Four Noble Truths and the three characteristics of existence. Those whose lives are guided by this knowledge need not be perfect saints, and indeed in mass society very few will even approximate to any degree of sanctity. But when people are guided by the principles of the Dhamma they will understand where their true welfare is to be found, and this understanding will enable them to distinguish clearly between what is truly in their interest and what appears attractive on the outside but eventually leads to harm.

From the standpoint of practical life, this is the critical distinction. A person enveloped in ignorance easily falls prey to craving, blindly pursues wealth, power, and status, and brings suffering upon himself as well as others. A person guided by the Dhamma understands the true good, the highest goal of life. This understanding stimulates desire, but a kind of desire that is the exact opposite of craving. Craving is blind desire, a self-centred drive for sensual pleasure, power, and

status. In contrast, the desire awakened by true knowledge is a wholesome desire, called in the texts "desire for the good" (*atthakāma*) or "desire for truth" (*dhamma-chanda*). Motivated by this wholesome desire, a person will engage in virtuous activities that lead to the realization of the good, and these activities will promote the well-being of both the individual and the community.

For Buddhism the highest goal is Nibbāna, liberation from ignorance and craving, release from the repetitive cycle of rebirths. In this paper I do not want to give a philosophical explanation of Nibbāna, but a practical one which will highlight the bearings the Dhamma has on our search for a viable social ethic. To go about this task, I intend to examine the experiential dimension of Nibbāna in a way that is not rigidly tied to the specific principles of Buddhist doctrine. One of my reasons for adopting such a general approach is to sketch a model for a righteous social order that can be readily appropriated by followers of other religious traditions, and also by those of no religious conviction who recognize the need for a sane alternative to the consumerist ideal. The task of "healing the wounds of the world" is not one that any single spiritual tradition can handle alone. We live in a pluralistic society in a pluralistic world, and what is needed is a cooperative effort by all men and women of spiritual sensitivity regardless of their faith. While each religion and spiritual path has its own unique perspectives, underlying their obvious differences is a shared perception of the inherent dignity of the human person. It is this perception that must be recovered and safeguarded against the dehumanizing impact of the free-market economy and its offshoot, the consumerist society.

In terms of living experience, the ultimate goal of Bud-

dhism combines four primary attributes: happiness, peace, freedom, and security. In Pāli, the language of the early Buddhist canon, Nibbāna is called *parama sukha*, the highest happiness; *anuttara santivarapada*, the supreme state of sublime peace; *vimutti*, liberation or deliverance; and *anuttara yogakkhema*, the supreme security from bondage. While these aspects of Nibbāna may seem far removed from our present condition, a little thought will show that they link up with our most basic aspirations, indeed with the most basic desires of all human beings regardless of religious affiliation. When we consider the true motivation behind all our actions, it should be immediately clear that what we really desire most is a state that combines these four qualities: happiness, peace, freedom, and security. The reason we fail to attain them is not that we desire their opposites – for no one deliberately seeks to be miserable, distressed, enslaved, and imperiled – but because we misconceive them and thus do not know how to attain them.

Under the influence of ignorance and delusion (*avijjā*), we seek our true good in the wrong direction, like a man who wants to go from Kandy to Colombo by heading north on the Matale road:

(1) We cannot distinguish *true happiness* from sensual gratification, and thus we seek happiness by frantically pursuing sensual pleasures, which are transient, degrading, and bound up with anxiety. To try to extract real happiness from sensual pleasures, however, is like trying to satisfy one's thirst by drinking sea water: the more one drinks, the thirstier one becomes.

(2) Again, we think that *peace* means the absence of conflict; thus we try to gain peace by subduing our opponents and by bullying our environment to serve our desires, unaware that this process is ultimately self-destructive.

(3) We identify *freedom* with license, the freedom to act on impulse, to do whatever we wish; thus we demand the right to act impetuously, without having to pay the price, without having to bear responsibility for our irresponsible actions.

(4) We think of *security* as protection from external harm; thus we shield ourselves in high-walled homes equipped with high-alert security systems, yet we never feel completely safe but live in the shadow of fear, of an anxiety that swells up from within.

What the Buddha teaches so clearly is that we must look within to achieve the vital goal towards which we aspire. He points out that real happiness, peace, freedom, and security have to be attained by overcoming the mental fetters that bind us so tightly to suffering. These fetters are the mind's defilements: greed, hatred, and delusion, along with their many offshoots such as anger, malice, jealousy, stinginess, hypocrisy, obstinacy, conceit, arrogance, vanity, and heedlessness. Thus to win our goal, we must turn the beam of our searchlight upon the mind itself and invest our energy in the task of self-purification.

While Nibbāna itself, in its fullness, may be remote from the common person mired in mundane responsibilities, this does not mean it is completely inaccessible to us. For Nibbāna is defined as the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion,

and this means that the goal must be reached by a gradual process which centres on the task of diminishing greed, hatred, and delusion in our everyday lives. We might even speak of the goal as "bending back" or "reaching down" and intersecting with our everyday concerns, spelling out the prerequisites for its own attainment. To advance towards Nibbāna from where we presently stand means that we must work to attenuate the influence of the defilements in our daily conduct: in our deeds, words, and thoughts. What we must do is replace greed with non-greed: with generosity, detachment, contentment, and simplicity. Instead of hoarding and accumulating things, Buddhism emphasizes the value of giving: the practice of generosity is the most effective way to erase the greed from one's own mind as well as to confer benefits on others. Instead of nurturing hatred and resentment, we are to develop loving-kindness and compassion towards others, to cooperate with them in meeting our common goals, and to bear adversity with patience and equanimity. And instead of remaining in the clouds of delusion, we are to develop wisdom: to acquire understanding and insight into the invariable laws that underlie human existence.

The work of self-purification is to be undertaken by treading the Noble Eightfold Path, with its three divisions of virtue, concentration, and wisdom. Each of these three divisions of the path is intended to check and remove the defilements at successively subtler levels. The training in virtue, which comprises right speech, right action, and right livelihood, checks the outward expression of the defilements in transgressive action, in conduct that violates the norms of the moral life. The training in concentration, which comprises right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, aims at eliminating the active eruption of the defilements into our

thought processes. And the training in wisdom, which comprises right view and right intention, aims at eradicating the defilements at the most fundamental level, as subtle seeds in the deep recesses of the mind. It is only when these defilements have been completely uprooted by wisdom, by direct insight into the true nature of phenomena, that ignorance is completely removed and knowledge fulfilled. And it is this that brings the realization of Nibbāna, the highest happiness, peace, freedom, and security right in this very life.

I want to emphasize here that while the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is inescapably personal, requiring individual effort and diligence, this practice has consequences that are profoundly and inextricably social. As I pointed out earlier, society is not an abstract entity but the aggregate-mass of its individual members. If we compare society to an organism, then its members are like the cells; and just as the health of a body's cells affects the well-being of the physical organism, so the conduct, attitudes, and values of a society's members inevitably influence the health of the social organism.

We need cherish no illusions that it will be feasible to marshal an entire society to walk along the Noble Eightfold Path. It is difficult enough even to get people to live a decent upright life governed by sound moral guidelines. The forces of darkness, of materialism and consumerism, have become so powerful, so seductive, so overwhelming, that it is only too easy to accept their propaganda as invincible truth. With the trend towards the globalized economy those who dominate the corporate culture have brought virtually all the media under their control, and thus to dispel the consumerist mirage is a most formidable challenge indeed. Yet the seeds of this system's own destruction have already sprung up from

within itself: in its growing polarization of the world into the rich and the poor; in its aggressive assault on every obstacle to corporate profit; in its disregard for basic human values; and of most importance today, in its reckless exploitation of the earth's own life-support systems.

Today we stand at a forked road, a road whose branches extend in two different directions. The choice of which road to take will decide our fate – our own personal fate and that of our planet. The road that has brought us to our present impasse is that of untrammelled development guided by a profit-oriented economic system. By extending our understanding of the physical world, science has conferred on us commanding powers over nature, a degree of control that is truly staggering. But the mastery we have won over the external world has been gained at the neglect of mastery over ourselves. To continue in this way, focused exclusively on more external development, is to place our very survival in jeopardy. That this risk is very real can be seen from the Conference on Climate Change in Kyoto (1997): virtually every country that participated, West and East, insisted on the right to pursue the path of unrestricted economic growth, even though this means that in the future the pollution of our air and water will become unbearable and unpredictable climate change may cause large-scale calamities. Indeed, one gets the impression that in their rush to win a share of the good life, people are ready to flirt with the prospect that by their unbridled greed they may rip away the very support systems that make life on earth possible.

The other road does not involve a rejection of science and technology, but a recognition of their proper place in the scale of human values. Their function is to serve the human community, to alleviate want, and to help provide the material

prosperity needed as a basis for the pursuit of other goals – cultural, intellectual, and spiritual development. What we need most urgently today is a shift in emphasis from external development to internal development. To focus upon internal development is not to escape into a private realm of subjective fantasy or to spurn the demands of social responsibility, but to organize our priorities in the way that brings the fullest realization of the human potential at the deepest level. The great spiritual teachers tell us that the goals of human life are governed by a scale of values, and that within this scale the highest value belongs to the highest goal. For Buddhism this is the attainment of enlightenment and liberation, the attainment of Nibbāna, to be won by treading the Noble Eightfold Path.

While the laws of the spiritual life have always held true, what we are being compelled to see today, with a clarity never before so striking, is the inextricable dependence of the external, material dimension of our existence on the internal, psychological dimension. In countless ways the point is being driven home to us that the world we share is a collective reflection of our minds, its social, economic, and political structures the outward projections of our thought patterns and value schemes. For this reason our common welfare, perhaps even our survival as a species, depends on a large-scale transformation of consciousness. This transformation must cut clear across all boundaries – East and West, North and South – dissolving obstinate attitudes and assumptions that are ultimately self-destructive. If I were to sum up in concise terms the implications that the Buddha's message has for us today, as we slide into the twenty-first century, it would be this: that we must recognize that the wounds that afflict our world are symptoms of the wounds that afflict our minds.

Our collective problems, from child prostitution to ecological devastation, from political corruption to corporate imperialism, are warning signs writ large of the destructive distortions in views and values that have sunk so deeply into our hearts. The bright side of the Buddha's message is that human beings can change. They are not held helpless captives of the mind's dark defilements, but by acknowledging their predicament, their suffering and anguish, they can begin the slow hard task of tackling the causes and thereby set about freeing themselves.

Surely such goals as social justice, relief from poverty, an end to communal conflict, and the protection of our natural environment deserve a top place on our agendas. But what the Buddha's teaching leads us to see is that we cannot reasonably expect to resolve these formidable social problems as long as we continue, in our personal lives, to move in the same familiar ruts of greed, carelessness, and selfishness. To heal the wounds of our world we must work to heal the wounds of our heart, the deep hidden wounds of greed, hatred, and delusion. The message, admittedly, is a difficult one, for inner changes always require greater effort than outer achievements, especially when the first step is self-understanding. In the final analysis, however, it is the only approach that will work, and this certainly makes it worthy of our attention.

I wish to close this paper with some words referring specifically to the condition of Buddhism within Asia. When we look at the way of life gaining ascendancy in Buddhist Asia today, it seems that the true Dhamma is rapidly losing its influence. There may be plenty of temples, gigantic Buddha images looking out on us from the hills and roadways, and

monks visible in all the major cities and towns. But a life inspired and guided by the Dhamma, based on moral rectitude, on lovingkindness and compassion, on respect and care for others: all this is in alarming decline. To prevent the true Dhamma from disappearing, radical and far-sighted steps will have to be taken.

To keep the Dhamma alive through the coming generations it is most essential to find ways to make the teaching meaningful to the younger generation. Given the way Buddhism is practised in Asia today, it seems that an educated young person will see in it little more than a system of rites and rituals, useful perhaps as a reminder of one's cultural and ethnic identity, but with very little relevance to our present concerns. The youth are the ones who will have to see that Buddhism survives into the next generation and that it will be able to offer its rich insights and spiritual practices to the global community. If we lose the youth to materialism and the cult of self-indulgence, we have lost the future of Buddhism, and at best all that will survive will be the outer crust of the religion, not its vital essence.

Success in keeping Buddhism alive requires that the true spiritual core of the Dhamma be extracted from its often constricting and deadening institutional embodiments. Above all, this task demands that the Dhamma be treated not as a basis for ethnic identity or cultural pride but as a living path of spiritual development and personal transformation that touches our most fundamental attitudes, goals, and values. It is only when the Dhamma is appropriated in such a way that it will serve to heal the wounds in our own minds and hearts, and it is only by healing the wounds within that we can face the momentous task of helping to heal the wounds of the world.

A Buddhist Approach to Economic and Social Development

In this paper I will be using the Buddha's teachings as a lens through which to examine the conception of economic and social development prevalent in today's world. If, as I contend, a Buddhist model of development is fundamentally incompatible with the dominant one, it is important to understand the reasons why. Thus I will first examine, from a Buddhist point of view, the model of development currently endorsed by most mainline economists and social analysts. Having shown the flaws in this model, I will then sketch some guideposts towards an alternative programme of economic and social development based on Buddhist principles. Since I am not by training an economist and really have little knowledge of this area, my comments will have to be very general, but as long as they are in accordance with the spiritual and ethical principles of the Dhamma even generalities can be helpful.

The notion of economic and social development has today become the rallying call of politicians, business leaders, and policy planners clear across the globe. This notion thus exercises a tremendous influence on the lives of all human beings, both at the personal level and as a determinant of social policy. Although the Buddhist texts prescribe certain principles to guide human beings in their economic and social activities, the notions of economic and social development

that dominate current policy formulation have no precise parallels in earlier epochs. Thus to give adequate treatment to our topic it is not enough merely to listen to the canonical texts. Rather, we must draw out the implications of such ideas as economic and social development in their bearings on present-day social policy. Then we must use the profound perspectives offered us by the Dhamma as a tool for evaluating them and judging their worth.

The goal of economic and social development currently being pursued by most developing nations is governed by a model represented by the West, particularly by the United States. Political leaders and business magnates, both East and West, take it for granted that the Western economic system provides the standard for the rest of the world to follow, offering the panacea for humanity's most persistent social problems – poverty, violence, and injustice. The word "development" implies a scale along which countries can be ranked according to their relative success in fulfilling this ideal. Those countries which successfully implement the ideal are called developed; those which haven't yet made the grade are said to be developing. It is assumed as a matter of course that all countries are moving along a single track in the same direction, with the West out ahead and the rest of the world struggling to catch up.

The chief characteristic of a developed country in this sense is determined almost exclusively by its economy. A developed country is understood to be one in which the economy is driven by the application of high technology to industrial production and commercial services. The trajectory of development is defined by both vertical and horizontal axes: the vertical axis is innovation in techniques and products, the horizontal axis expansion in production and distribution. In

such a society the rest of the social order is subordinated to the economy in such a way as to enable the economy to function with maximum efficiency. The rationalization offered to explain this form of social organization is that an efficient economy, marked by mass-scale production and wide distribution of goods, is the indispensable means for promoting the general welfare. By constantly raising levels of production and distribution, its proponents hold, a super-abundance of wealth will be created which will eventually trickle down to everyone, thus ensuring that everyone gets a share of the cake.

It is on this theoretical foundation that the West has pursued unchecked economic growth since the days of the Industrial Revolution, and it is in awe of the West's enormous technological prowess and material affluence that the rest of the world has chosen to follow its lead. This model has deeply impressed the leaders of Asian countries throughout the Buddhist world, who seem, almost without exception, committed to developing an economy geared to industrial production and the use of high technology. Thus it is of paramount importance to those responsible for guiding the future of Buddhism in those countries to contemplate this model in its many ramifications.

A detailed examination of this conception of economic and social development would require at least a full-length paper, but in this short presentation I intend to raise two simple questions. First: Is it really feasible for the rest of the world to emulate the Western model? And second: If it is feasible, is it really desirable for us to take this route? The first question is quite independent of a Buddhist point of view, since it involves considerations that do not hinge on any particular religious commitment. The second question, however,

brings in a Buddhist perspective and asks whether the Western approach to development is truly compatible with the spirit that animates the Buddha's teaching.

Is It Feasible for All?

The first question can be answered very simply. Not only is it unfeasible for the rest of the world to pursue the road to development taken by the West, but it is virtually impossible for the Western economies (and those of the "newly industrialized countries") to continue along this track much longer without jeopardizing everyone. The pursuit of economic development through high technology and industrialization has brought in its trail consequences that verge on disaster, threatening to undermine the very support systems on which sentient life depends.

The human economy does not operate in an infinite expanse capable of providing an inexhaustible supply of resources. It operates, rather, in an ecosystem which is closed, finite, and extremely fragile. When the economy expands, it does so by absorbing into itself more and more of the resource base of the ecosystem and by burdening the ecosystem in turn with its waste. The ecosystem imposes a limit of 100%, beyond which nothing more remains for consumption. But long before the human economy reaches that limit, it will cross a threshold point beyond which the delicate fabric of the ecosystem will be damaged so badly it can no longer sustain higher forms of life.

We may already be very close to that threshold; we have no sure way to know in advance, and as natural systems can disintegrate from below very slowly the final catastrophe may not become evident at once. With the human population due to increase by 50% over the next half century, the stress on

the environment is bound to rise to even more perilous levels, levels which will be stretched still further by the global pursuit of economic growth. Not only is it reckless and irresponsible for the countries of the Third World to head down the road of expansive industrial production, but our very survival as a species will require that we place unrelenting pressure on the North to drastically cut down on current high levels of production and consumption and adopt new models of economic organization more conducive to the ecological health of the world.

Is It Desirable At All?

The second question I posed assumes (contrary to actual fact) that the Western model of economic development is ecologically feasible, and asks whether it would still be desirable from a Buddhist point of view. Once we have seen that the model portends ecological disaster, it might seem unnecessary even to raise this question. Such would indeed be the case if human beings were really as rational as they claim to be, but like moths heading towards a flame our leaders and policy planners still seem drawn towards economic growth as the master solution to the weighty social problems pressing so heavily on their lands. Therefore a brief discussion of this question is desirable.

In reply, I would say succinctly that the Western model is not desirable, on the grounds that it has inescapable economic, social, and cultural consequences which, from a Buddhist perspective, are unmistakably pernicious. Let us briefly examine each category in turn.

(a) *Economic*. The proponents of global capitalism advocate continuous growth as the means to eliminate poverty and ensure general prosperity. The slogan that expresses this

bit of conventional wisdom is "the rising tide will lift all boats." However, after over fifty years of incessant global development, we find the gap between rich and poor wider than ever before and increasing almost in tandem with the degree of economic growth. The gap has widened both *between* the rich and poor nations of the world, and also *between* the rich and poor *within* most of the world's nations. Over the past half century economic growth has expanded fivefold, international trade twelve fold, and direct foreign investment by 24–36 times. Yet today a higher proportion of the world's population is living below the poverty line than ever before. The population of the North, which makes up 20% of the world total, receives 80% of world income, while the bottom 20% takes in only 1.4%. The combined incomes of the top 20% are 60 times larger than those at the bottom 20%; this is twice as high as in 1950, when they were only 30 times larger. In short, the economic growth of fifty years has not brought the universal benefits promised in such glowing terms. To the contrary, the wealth generated has accrued to a minuscule minority, the corporate and financial elite, while increasing numbers, now in the West as well, sink deeper into insecurity and poverty.

(b) *Social*. The social consequences of the industrial growth economy are equally grim. A traditional Buddhist society is characterized by a high degree of social cohesion and a strong sense of community, its members linked in a rich web of relationships, from the family on up, that confer a deep sense of personal anchorage. Most people earn their living by subsistence agriculture, craftsmanship, and small-scale trade, occupations which bring them into direct contact with those who purchase and consume their products. Spiritual guidance comes from the Sangha, the order of monks and nuns,

who not only pass on to the lay community the teachings of the Buddha but also stand at the acme of civil society as living examples of the spiritual virtues needed to win the ultimate goal, Nibbāna.

Enter the market economy, beginning from the colonial era, and the complex web of sustaining relationships is twisted into a tangle. Small farms are dismantled in favour of large estates used to grow cash crops for sale on the global market. Small industries are driven into extinction by the arrival of the transnational corporation, artisans rendered superfluous by cheap mass-produced goods, the small retailer driven into bankruptcy by the spread of the supermarket and chain store.

As people are dispossessed of their land and businesses, unemployment soars, and large numbers drift towards the cities, seeking employment in factories and accommodation in the spreading slums. There they toil at tedious tasks for long hours and low wages, sometimes under dangerous conditions. Hit by the blows of the market economy, the close bonds of community are suddenly sundered. The blow can be traumatic. People find themselves adrift in a sea of distrust, as the close personal ties so characteristic of traditional society give way to cold impersonal confrontations between nameless faces in the crowd. Instead of cooperating to promote the common good, people are subtly forced to compete with each other in a brute struggle for subsistence that can be won only by bending others to one's advantage.

Family relations also disintegrate: first the closely knit extended family dissolves into the self-enclosed nuclear family; then the nuclear family in turn splits up, leaving behind broken marriages, lonely adults, and emotionally deprived children. The degrading nature of this social system is clearly evident in the symptoms of decline so prevalent today, both

in the North and the South: homelessness, escalating crime, prostitution and child abuse, juvenile delinquency, suicide, pervasive alcoholism and drug addiction.

(c) *Cultural*. In traditional Buddhist societies concern with the accumulation of wealth and goods is subordinated to the pursuit of ethical and spiritual virtues. The Dhamma, as the peerless guide to thought and action, encourages such qualities as simplicity, contentment, generosity, and self-sacrifice. Wisdom is cherished above mere cleverness, moral purity above wealth and status. But with the rise of the industrial growth society, everything changes, as the drive to acquire, own, and consume turns into a tyrannical master whose demands are implacable.

The need to dissolve the attitudes enjoined by traditional Buddhist culture is inherent in the logic of global capitalism, and it is therefore naive to expect reform to come about simply by giving the giant corporations an injection of Buddhist precepts. The driving engine of the corporate economy is the need to increase profits, and to achieve this objective it must methodically undercut all those traditional values that discourage the acquisitive urge. The corporate leaders do not have to accomplish this by direct assault, and generally they will espouse moral values. But by subtly manipulating people's perceptions and ways of thinking at deep subliminal levels, the corporate system gradually transforms them into consumers whose lives centre around the unconstrained acquisition and enjoyment of technologically produced commodities. The most vulnerable targets are the young, who are encouraged to develop a culture of their own in which popularity and status are determined by what they own, wear, sing, and eat.

The avenues of invasion are manifold. They include tele-

vision, the cinema, videos, and music, which nurtures the rise of a global monoculture in which all traditional diversity is dissolved. Chain stores and shopping malls make their contribution too, providing the commodities essential to high status. But the most direct agent of attack is the advertising industry, which plants in people's minds the firm conviction that the ruling purpose of their lives is nothing more than to acquire and enjoy, without need for scruples or restraint.

Buddhist Guideposts towards Development

At the present point in history it is difficult to offer a well-designed practical plan for economic and social development that has already proved its worth. Standing at the threshold of the third millennium we are entering a new frontier, where we must work out new solutions to formidable problems by sheer trial and error. It is clear enough, however, that with the global industrial economy pushing the world towards the brink of catastrophe, we have no choice but to envision viable alternatives, and already, in various quarters, the search for new models is diligently underway. In what follows I will enumerate a few simple guideposts for a Buddhist approach to development.

The first task that Buddhism would have to undertake is to reverse a strange inversion of logic that lies at the heart of the industrial growth model of development. When we view this model in the light of the Buddha's teaching, it is at once obvious that it rests upon an extraordinary degree of abstraction from the concrete reality of lived experience. This abstraction takes place in at least two stages. First, the economy, which in traditional cultures occupies a subordinate place in the social order, is drawn out from its proper bounds and taken as the chief criterion for judging societal well-being.

Then, as if this were not enough, the health of the economy is conceived exclusively in quantitative terms, by means of such indicators as the GNP or the GDP. These indicators measure only a country's total exchange of monetary goods and services. They reveal nothing at all about the qualitative nature of the goods and services exchanged; they do not register the social and ecological costs of economic development; they say nothing about how the wealth generated is distributed among a country's population. Yet a myopic fixation on bolstering GDP captivates the attention of policy planners everywhere, guiding the formulation of economic and social policy in virtually every country on Earth. This narrowness of vision encourages a double parasitism, whereby the economy becomes a parasite on the social order and both combined gnaw away at the planet's delicate ecosystem.

The Four Noble Truths of the Buddha provide us with a powerful instrument for diagnosing the causes and results of this distortion of vision. The cause is ignorance, not seeing things as they really are, which provides a field for craving to emerge and bring entire societies under its dominion. When there is craving, as we know from the Four Truths, suffering is bound to follow, and this is amply confirmed when we survey the debris left behind by the global race towards development.

The fundamental concept that must underlie any Buddhist approach to economic and social development is "Dhamma," the natural, self-subsistent law of righteousness and truth realized by the Buddha through his enlightenment and communicated by his teaching. The primacy of Dhamma means that economic and social policy must be guided from start to finish by ethical norms. These norms are not mere matters of subjective judgement, personal and relative, but real and

immutable laws written into the very fabric of being. This does not imply that there is one invariable form of social and economic organization valid for all people under all conditions. A wide range of alternatives are possible, as diverse as natural landscapes, but for any such system to conduce to real human welfare it must be grounded on sound ethical principles which encourage people to strive for moral integrity in their lives. A social system which runs counter to the Dhamma, which encourages or condones unethical behaviour, is bound to bring widespread misery and destitution, not only for human beings but for the entire natural order. We can see concrete proof of this in present-day corporate capitalism. Founded on the idea that selfishness, greed, and unrestrained consumption are the keys to progress, the whole juggernaut drives us steadily towards global catastrophe.

From the centrality of Dhamma to social order two subsidiary principles follow, one specially relevant to the economic sphere, the other to the social sphere. The principle that should govern the economic sphere is "the rule of sufficiency," which means simply knowing that enough is enough. The rule of sufficiency is both a policy of mental hygiene contributing to psychological balance and a policy of ecological wisdom contributing to the preservation of the natural environment. In both respects the rule promotes a sound economy in the literal meaning of the word: "home management," the judicious ordering of our internal home of mind and of our external home, the natural world.

As a discipline of mental hygiene, the rule of sufficiency rests on the insight that human needs are hierarchical – as I will shortly explain – and that there is a point of satiation in meeting material needs beyond which continued gratification becomes deleterious. This does not imply that we must

all adopt ascetic lifestyles and deny ourselves even the innocent pleasures of life. But it does mean that when people seek to acquire possessions and enjoy sensual pleasures beyond their natural capacities, they do so at the expense of other needs, social and spiritual, which are equally crucial to their fulfilment. Thereby they violate a law of human nature and bring harm to themselves and to those victimized by their avarice.

As a policy of ecological wisdom, the rule of sufficiency teaches us that there are inherent limits to economic growth dictated by the unsurmountable finitude of the ecosystem. Pursued beyond these limits, economic expansion becomes parasitic both on human health, physical and mental, and on the regenerative capacities of nature. When applied to our present-day situation, this principle teaches us that economic development, in the sense of continuously expanding production and obsessive technological innovation, is precisely what we *don't* need. Our economy is big enough already, far too big, and our technologies too smart, too powerful, and too much fraught with moral risk for beings as fallible as ourselves. What we need most of all is streamlining and downsizing: cutting down on weapons production, on industries dedicated to wasteful luxuries, on conspicuous consumption as the engine that drives the economy. Instead we need qualitative improvements to make our technologies more humble and humane, more benign towards the total biosphere. And above all we need greater stress on economic justice and social equity, so that no one need be deprived of a fair standard of living.

The principle that should guide social activity is the rule of cooperation and harmony. But cooperation must be infused and animated by ethical motivation. The cooperation

between super-powers to dominate the global political order in their own selfish interests is not the kind of cooperation we require; the mergers, corporate takeovers, and business cartels formed to control the world economy is not the kind of cooperation that accords with the Dhamma. Our current social order promotes competition rather than cooperation; the key word bandied about today is competitiveness. Such an emphasis is bound to generate conflict and resentment, splintering the social system into a multitude of hostile factions. A society founded upon the Dhamma recognizes that each person should aim to promote the good of the greater unit to which he or she belongs, and as a minimum should never seek private fulfilment in ways that inflict harm on others. The ideal is beautifully summed up in the "six principles of harmony and respect" taught by the Buddha to the Sangha: loving kindness in thought, word, and deed; sharing righteous gains; observing a common code of morality; and holding in common liberating views.

In a Buddhist approach to social and economic development, the primary criterion that would govern policy formulation should be the well-being of a society's members, and this well-being should be viewed holistically, taking account of a wide range of factors. The economy would be assigned to the place where it belongs, as a subordinate domain nested within the wider social system; in turn the social system would be viewed as an integral part of the total ecosystem, the indispensable foundation for all life. Thus economic development would be guided along lines that promote the health and well-being of the social order without harming the natural systems within which human society is lodged. To the contrary, a Buddhist social policy would recognize the importance of preserving the natural environment, not

simply to provide a continued supply of resources for the human economy, but as a positive good both intrinsically and in relation to the aesthetic enrichment and psychological wholeness of its members.

Society in turn must be recognized as an abstraction from the individual human beings who make up the social order. Thus, when we speak of improving the well-being of society, this ultimately means that social policy must seek to promote the welfare of individual people. How we set about promoting the welfare of people is contingent on our view of human nature. If we hold a materialistic view of human nature, then our efforts will be directed primarily to ensuring that their material needs are met, and we will see no reason to give attention to other factors. If, however, we hold a more spiritual conception of human nature, then we will recognize that other needs beyond material prosperity also call out for fulfilment.

The Buddha's teachings offer a wide-ranging conception of the human person as a complex entity having a diversity of needs which all must be met to ensure happiness and well-being. These needs fall into a well-defined hierarchy of importance, which we might here consider as threefold. At the base of the hierarchy is the physical need for the basic requisites of existence: clothing, food, a comfortable dwelling, medical care, transportation, energy, tools, and so forth. At the next level are social needs: for education, family, friendship and personal intimacy, participation in a community, and meaningful work. At the highest level are spiritual needs: for moral rectitude, mental development, and wise understanding of the true nature of life.

A social order guided by Buddhist principles would create opportunities for all these needs to be satisfied and would

see that no one is frustrated in their aspirations to lead a contented life. A Buddhist social order would begin by ensuring that all members of society are able to satisfy their material needs. But because the Buddhist teaching views needs hierarchically, it does not encourage the narrow fixation on material acquisition and sensual gratification so characteristic of contemporary culture. By pointing out that the crass pursuit of luxury and abundance is a root-cause of suffering, Buddhism encourages restraint, simplicity, and contentment. By extolling generosity as a basic virtue and the mark of a superior person, it promotes a wide distribution of basic necessities so that no one has to suffer deprivation.

For Buddhism, however, material satisfaction merely provides a starting point for the pursuit of higher goals. Since human beings are social creatures who naturally come together for common ends, this means that a social order guided by Buddhist principles would consist primarily of small-scale communities in which each member can make an effective contribution. Only small-scale social arrangements can rescue people from the ominous abyss of meaningless so pervasive in modern urban life. From a Buddhist perspective, the vast polluted mega-cities and impersonal bureaucracies characteristic of our era would have to be considered deviations from the natural order conducive to true human well-being. They are a travesty of our inherent need for communal participation. The local communities consonant with Buddhist principles would focus on the extended family as the primary unit of social integration. The family would be guided by Buddhist views and values, which they will serve to transmit from one generation to the next. The model for the entire web of social relationships would be that provided in the magnificent Sigalovada Sutta (Digha Nikaya No. 31),

where the Buddha minutely defines the reciprocal duties of parents and children, husband and wife, employer and employee, friend and friend, teacher and students, monks and laity.

The economy most compatible with such a mode of social organization would be small-scale and localized, using simple technology which does not drain natural resources. In such an economy production would be aimed principally at local consumption, so that there would be direct face-to-face contact between producers and consumers. Modalities would have to be worked out to bring about integration of the small local economies into a broader national and global economy, but the driving engine of the entire system would be the promotion of well-being both material and social, not commercial profit and unrestrained expansion.

But even a prosperous economy and a harmonious social order cannot satisfy the deepest need of the human heart: the need for meaning, for an ultimate purpose around which our lives should revolve and a path of conduct to guide us through the thickets of difficult decisions. This need can only be met by religion: religion not as a bond reinforcing a sense of communal identity, not as a legacy of traditional rituals and beliefs, but as a genuine path of self-transformation opening upon a transcendent reality. Since in the ontological order it is this reality which claims the highest place, it follows that in the hierarchy of values it is spiritual values that should claim our deepest respect.

Genuine spiritual values do not exist in a self-enclosed domain of their own cut off from the rest of life. Rather, they spill forth and pervade all other aspects of our existence, sustaining them in a unifying vision and steering them in the direction of the highest good. Thus in a sound and healthy

social order spiritual vision will guide the formulation of economic and social policy, ensuring that the latter do not stop short at mundane ends but aim beyond themselves towards the dimension of transcendence. In a predominantly Buddhist society, the highest good is Nibbāna, and economic and social life would be seen as offering the opportunity for making progress towards Nibbāna. Though the final goal may be accessible only to those who embark on the austere road of renunciation, the Buddhist path reaches down into the mire of everyday life and spells out, with clarity and precision, the steps needed to advance in the direction of the final goal. Thus in a Buddhist social order the ceaseless struggle for mundane subsistence would be considered, not as a mere series of technical problems in need of a technological fix, but as an opportunity for cultivating the virtues of mind and heart that lead to the highest. This gives us the ultimate meaning of development for a Buddhist society: the development of morality, concentration, and wisdom culminating in full enlightenment and liberation from suffering.

A true Buddhist social order would try to make this prospect available to its members by nurturing a Sangha, a community of renunciant monks and nuns, and providing for their material needs. These renunciants in turn would guide the broader community in the Buddha's teaching and provide them with the inspiring example of those who have withdrawn from the cycle of production and consumption to devote themselves to a holy life.

One last word is called for. It may seem that I have just sketched a plan that is beautiful and compelling on paper, but utterly idealistic and impracticable in fact. In part I agree. To implement such a model will be extremely difficult, awak-

ening staunch resistance from mighty sectors with immense wealth and power. But we have to recognize that in a world moving steadily to universal democracy the final say in determining the forms of social organization under which we live must rest with people, with you and me. When a system assumes forms which bring extravagant benefits to a few and great misery and deprivation to many, there is no cogent reason for it to continue. All that sustains it is the naked ambitions of the elite at its helm, and the web of deceit they weave to hide the truth from ordinary people.

Today this web of deception is dissolving on many fronts: in ecological disasters, in increasing unemployment and economic injustice, in the waves of crime, exploitation, and social degeneration so visible everywhere, especially in the Third World, where most of the world's population lives. Large numbers of people, who have seen through the mirage of technological progress and global capitalism, realize that this system is unsustainable, indeed that it is ultimately harmful for its beneficiaries as much as for its manifest victims. In many quarters – grass-roots organizations, counter-culture movements, and alternative think-tanks – the search is on for a way to preserve this planet in the new century. To such people Buddhism offers a message which is at once lofty and sublime yet capable of addressing in lucid terms the hard realities of social and economic life. It is the responsibility of the Buddhist community to sound that message, in its spiritual heights and earthly applications, for the benefit of all living beings.

The Changing Face of Buddhism

On those rare occasions when I visit an urban Buddhist temple here in Sri Lanka, I am repeatedly struck by the stark observation that almost all the devotees present are middle aged or elderly people, perhaps accompanied by their grandchildren. In the viharas of our towns and cities young people, and even adults in the prime of life, are most conspicuous by their absence. For a country where seventy percent of the population is counted as Buddhist, such an uneven turnout at religious functions is ominous. For Buddhism to continue from one generation to the next, the flame of religious faith must be transmitted across the gap of generations. If, however, it is indeed these invisible young people who hold the future of the Sāsana in their hands, then that future does not seem very bright. Their absence is perhaps a warning that the message of the Dhamma is not hitting home, that its representatives are failing to translate its principles into a language that speaks to those most in need of its guidance. Should this trend continue, in a few more generations Buddhism may become just a relic of Sri Lanka's ancient heritage: beautiful to look upon but as lifeless as the ruins at Anuradhapura.

Outwardly, symbols of Sri Lanka's Buddhist legacy can be seen everywhere in this land. Monks still play prominent roles at public functions; gigantic Buddha images stare down at us from the hilltops; in most towns a steady stream of *pirit* chanting blares out twice daily from the loudspeakers. Paradoxically

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cally, however, these outward emblems of Buddhist piety co-exist in an uneasy tension with a malignant spiritual disease whose symptoms have spread across all strata of Sri Lankan society. A bitter internecine war drags on interminably, with a brutalizing impact on the whole country. Strikes are commonplace in our essential services, holding the poor and helpless hostage. Murder, theft, rape, drug-trafficking, the sexual exploitation of children – all have become so widespread that even the most gruesome criminal act barely pricks our sense of moral outrage. Alcohol, drug use, and suicide are the most common escape routes, especially for the poor, but their popularity is hardly a sign that Buddhism is thriving.

If Buddhism is failing to penetrate deep into the hearts of those who profess it as their faith, we have to ask ourselves why, and to ask what can be done to reverse present trends. I would like to approach these questions by first asking what role Buddhism is intended to play in our lives in the first place. I will deal with this question by distinguishing two aspects of Buddhism both stemming from the Buddha's original teaching. I shall call these the liberative and the accommodative strands of the Dhamma.

The liberative strand, the essential and unique discovery of the Buddha, is the message of a direct way to liberation from suffering. This strand begins with the realization that suffering originates within ourselves, from our own greed, hatred, and ignorance, above all from our drive to establish a sense of separate selfhood that pits us against all other living forms. The Buddha's radical solution to the problem of suffering is the demolition of the self-delusion in its entirety. This issues in an utterly new mode of being that the Buddha called "Nibbāna," the extinguishing of the fire of lust, the going out of the ego-consciousness with its flames of selfish craving.

The attainment of this goal, however, requires a price far higher than most people can pay: a strict discipline of contemplation grounded upon a radical ethic of restraint. Thus, being a skilful teacher, the Buddha modulated his teaching by including another dimension suitable for those unable to walk the steep road of renunciation. This is the accommodative strand of the Dhamma: a path of gradual transformation, extending over many lives, fulfilled by training in meritorious deeds and developing the virtues needed as a foundation for the ultimate attainment of Nibbāna. This strand of Dhamma; it must be emphasized, is not merely an expedient device, a beautiful fable invented by the Buddha as a means of offering consolation or of inculcating moral virtues. It is, rather, an integral aspect of the original teaching stemming from the Buddha's own vision into the multiple dimensions of sentient existence and the prospects for transmigration within the round of rebirths. But the function of this teaching within his system of training is provisional rather than ultimate, mundane rather than transcendent.

I call this dimension of Buddhism "accommodative" for two reasons: first, because it accommodates the doctrine of deliverance to the capacities and needs of those unable to follow the austere path of meditation prescribed as the direct route to Nibbāna; and second because it helps to accommodate Buddhist followers within saṃsāra while offering salutary guidance to protect them from the more intense forms of worldly suffering, especially from a fall into lower spheres of rebirth. In its accommodative dimension, Buddhism provides a comprehensive worldview which gives ordinary men and women a meaningful picture of their place in the cosmos. At the same time it propounds an elevated system of values that includes ethical rules to help us live happily amidst the fluctuations of daily life and in harmony with our fellow human beings.

Although the original keynote of the Dhamma was the message of deliverance, as Buddhism spread first across India and later over wider Asia, the balance between its two strands swung away from the liberative towards the accommodative. Such a development was only natural when a spiritual teaching whose liberative core was suited for renunciants became the religion of an entire nation, as happened in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in Asia. But this aspect of Buddhism should not be disparaged or placed in competitive contrast to the liberative dimension, for both are equally essential to the aims of the Buddha's teachings. The path of renunciation leading to final liberation was always suited for the few, even within the ranks of the monastic order; for the many the accommodative strand of Buddhism was necessary, both as a worldview and as a means of preparing the ground for practice of the liberative Dhamma.

Through the centuries accommodative Buddhism portrayed for us an orderly universe with the Buddha as the supreme teacher, with multiple heavens inhabited by benevolent gods, governed by an ethical law connecting our present actions with our future destinies. By means of its doctrine of merit, this side of Buddhism gave people an incentive for doing good deeds, and the fruits of this were evident in the general spirit of benevolence that prevailed in traditional Buddhist societies.

From ancient times until the modern era, the picture of the universe offered by accommodative Buddhism functioned as the unchallenged bedrock for the preaching and practice of the Dhamma. However, beginning in the late fifteenth century, from beyond the horizon a challenge came that was to shatter the self-assured certainty of this worldview. The challenge took the shape of the European colonial powers who, in successive waves, grabbed control of the social and political institutions

on which popular Buddhism depended. Foreign conquest, the proselytizing missions of the Christian churches, the secularization of education and its subordination to colonial rule: all these measures together dealt a hard blow to Buddhist self-esteem and to the sovereign role of the Dhamma in the lives of the wider Buddhist population.

This trend was reinforced by the rise of the scientific worldview. Although the basic principles of the scientific method could easily resonate with the Buddhist spirit of free inquiry, science introduced an understanding of the world that, in its materialistic biases, clashed with the spiritual vistas envisaged by Buddhist tradition. While classical Buddhism posits a multi-tiered universe inhabited by many classes of sentient beings who transmigrate from realm to realm in accordance with their karma, scientific naturalism holds that life is a purely physical process which utterly terminates at death, with no survival of personal identity in any form beyond bodily death. While Buddhist thought sees mind as primary and matter as subordinate to mind, naturalism sees matter as fundamental and mind as derivative, a by-product or aspect of material processes. While Buddhism posits a transcendent goal, a supramundane reality to be won by moral and spiritual training, naturalism sees nothing beyond the empirical world and regards all ethical and religious codes as of purely human origin. In the West too the rise of science, in conjunction with an insistent demand for intellectual and moral freedom, worked to dislodge Christianity from its dominant place in the Western mindset.

It was not, however, merely the theoretical power of modern science that threatened the traditional Buddhist worldview and its attendant scheme of values. In fact, in the early twentieth century Buddhist thinkers could enroll science as an ally in their struggle against Christian triumphalism. But what has

turned the tables on traditional Buddhist values has not been theory but praxis: the harnessing of technology by a free-market economic system in quest of expanding profits.

This marriage between technology and the free market has given birth to a ravenous consumerist culture grounded on the premise that material affluence and sensual enjoyment are the only worthwhile goals in life. At the present time it is perhaps this culture of consumerism, stimulated by advertising and the popular media, that poses the single biggest challenge to spirituality as an effective force in people's lives. In the cities this culture enfolds the affluent elite in clouds of hedonistic self-indulgence. For the urban and rural poor – awed by its splendours as presented by television, radio, and cinema – it breeds envy, resentment, and despair. Under such circumstances, is there any cause for wonder that alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, and violent crime have escalated so sharply?

This clash of worldviews and value systems also explains why the Buddhism of the temples has become so peripheral to our younger generation. In temple Buddhism today, the language in which the teaching is couched – the ambience, the flavour, the whole tenor of the teaching – is one rooted in the worldview of medieval accommodative Buddhism. This may be lovely, ennobling, and even true in its own way, but it is hardly able to deliver the message of the Dhamma to those nurtured on the ways of modernity. The teachings of temple Buddhism stem from a culture irretrievably gone, from an era where roles were clearly defined and everything had its place in an intelligible, friendly whole. But we live, breathe, and wend our way along the streets of the modern world, where changes take place at blinding speed, where a host of aggressive voices compete for our attention, where every cosy assumption is exposed to merciless questioning. For those struggling to find a

niche for themselves in such a world, the self-assured Buddhism of the temples has ceased to be "the Dhamma," the message of awakening that blows open our minds and floods them with light. Instead it has become just a quaint reminder of the past, still capable of evoking occasional moods of piety, but barely relevant to the difficult choices we face amidst the grind of daily life.

One approach to this clash of worldviews is to retreat defensively into the past, to try to seal off our ancient cultural and religious heritage from the depredations of modernity, and to extol the superiority of Buddhism to everything modern. This is the fundamentalist stance, not necessarily an aggressive stance, but one which chooses nostalgic retreat to the past over innovative adjustment to the present. From this perspective the arrival of modern culture poses an intrinsic threat to the Dhamma, and the only way to protect the precious teaching is by rejecting modernity and attempting to preserve the heritage of tradition with minimal change.

However, for any organism to survive it must adapt to changes in the environment. To reject the new environment and struggle to preserve the past is to risk petrification: to turn Buddhism into an outdated antique whose relevance has vanished and which remains only as a stimulus for feelings of devotional piety. This has been the attitude in more traditionalist Buddhist circles. Its stubborn conservatism, which weds the spiritual vistas of the Dhamma to a particular culture and social order, partly accounts for the withering relevance of Buddhism in the eyes of many in the younger generations.

Yet retreat into the past is not the only way to preserve the Dhamma from destruction. Indeed, such regressive pietism preserves only the shell, the outer forms of Buddhism, while nullifying its inner vitality. Another approach, a more optimistic

one, is available to us, one which does not jump to the conclusion that the arrival of modernity will necessarily sound the death knoll of the Dhamma. Looked at from this angle, the current crisis of Buddhist culture might be seen as a means of purgation, helping us to separate the chaff from the kernel and rediscover what is truly timeless in the Buddha's message. This means that a new emphasis is required, one which might be described as a turn from the overemphasis on the accommodative dimension of Buddhism to the liberative.

When I speak about this shift in emphasis, I do not intend to say that the traditional Buddhist worldview is wrong and must be jettisoned in favour of the purely naturalistic outlook proposed by modern science. In fact, allowing for inevitable mythological elements in Buddhist tradition, I would maintain that the Buddhist worldview, with its recognition of the crucial role of the mind and the inconceivably vast dimensions of reality, is much richer and more adequate to philosophical reflection than the flattened worldview bequeathed to us through a presumptuous misapplication of the scientific method beyond its legitimate domain. In any case, one impressive feature of the Buddha's teaching is the independence of its liberative core from any particular cosmology, its ability to speak directly to our most fundamental concerns in a way that is immediately and personally verifiable no matter what cosmology one adopts. In terms of our present situation, material progress, the fulfilment of the consumerist dream, forces us to recognize that affluence does not bring real happiness but only leaves us empty, thirsting for some deeper fulfilment. Thereby we are brought to see the hard truth, enshrined in the liberative Dhamma, that craving is the cause of suffering. We can also see that release from suffering can never be won by yielding to the incessant implorations of craving, but only by

mastering our minds through methodical training aimed at self-knowledge and self-transformation.

While it is difficult to predict the directions that institutional Buddhism will take in the coming decades, we can discern at work today several important trends which may actually herald a true revival of the Dhamma. One is disenchantment with the supposed blessings of consumerism. The realization that happiness cannot be bought in the shopping mall should awaken in us an urgent desire to find a more genuine sense of meaning for our lives, a peace and happiness that does not depend on outer conditions. We see signs of this already in the increasing number of lay Buddhists willing to take up the hard work of meditation, traditionally considered the preserve of the monks. For such people, the practice of Buddhism is not so much a matter of conventional rituals as an inward training to be pursued privately or in small groups with like-minded friends.

The impact of materialism thus sends us back to the original liberative strand of the Dhamma, for centuries submerged beneath the accommodationist dimension. But while the older message spoke of the goal mainly as release from the round of rebirths, the stress required today should be on the benefits of Dhamma practice visible here and now: on the happiness and fulfilment won through greater self-knowledge and mastery of the mind. This, of course, is not intended to question the veracity of the doctrine of rebirth and the conception of the goal as ultimate release from saṃsāra, but only to insist that for this ultimate goal to become meaningful and relevant to us we must first put our everyday lives in order through self-understanding and self-mastery. Otherwise it is likely to remain the utopian fantasy that it is within much of present-day accommodative Buddhism.

However, the quest for personal peace of mind does not exhaust the promise of the Dhamma in the epoch that lies ahead. For we live at a decisive moment in history when the future of humankind, and even of our planet as a biological entity, hangs in a delicate balance. Our instantaneous media of communication and rapid means of transportation have welded people everywhere into a single family in which each member is to some degree responsible for the welfare of the whole, not only of all human beings but of the entire community of life. But while our technologies have given us the capacity to provide a decent living to everyone, grave problems of enormous scope remain. Poverty, war, hunger, exploitation, and injustice still cast their shadows over our future, claiming too many victims who cannot even voice their grievances, let alone set them right.

These problems – political, economic, social, and ecological – cry out for solutions, and one of the major tasks faced by every major religion today is to serve as the voice of humanity's conscience. To regard these problems as merely temporary snags that can easily be resolved by political and social reform is to miss the point that what underlies them all, in different ways, is a blind and stubborn selfishness pernicious in its consequences. It is precisely the role of religion, in its innermost essence, to address and rectify this malignancy. Too often in the past religion has been an inflammatory force creating divisions rather than unity, and this trend can still be seen today in the various kinds of religious fundamentalism rippling across the globe. But all the great spiritual traditions contain at their core a perception of humanity's unity, to be translated into a life guided by love and compassion. It is this side of religion, and not the divisive, that must be fostered in the immediate future.

One of the primary tasks facing Buddhism in the global world of the future is to develop a comprehensive vision of solutions to the social, economic, and political problems that loom so large today. This is not a matter of blending religion and politics, but of making an acute diagnosis of the destructive fixations of consciousness from which these problems spring. The diagnosis must lay bare how human defilements – the same greed, hatred, and ignorance responsible for private suffering – take on a collective dimension embedded in social structures. What is necessary is not only to expose the oppressive, detrimental nature of such structures, but to envisage and strive for new alternatives: fresh perspectives on social organization and human relatedness that can ensure political, economic, and social justice, the preservation of the natural environment, and the actualization of our spiritual potential.

Although such a project, on so vast a scale, will be a new challenge to Buddhism, it is a challenge that can be partly met with the Buddha's insights into the origination of suffering and the means to its resolution. But only partly, for creative thought is needed to apply these insights to today's unique problems. This means in effect expanding the liberative dimension of the Dhamma by giving it a collective or even global application. In this enterprise, Buddhists must join hands with leaders of other religions committed to the same goal. Beneath their inevitable differences, the great religions concur in seeing our grave social and communal problems as stemming from a primordial blindness rooted in the delusion of self, either personal or blown up into ethnic and nationalistic identities.

From the perspective of the great spiritual traditions, what we must do to redeem ourselves and preserve humanity's place on earth is to abandon our obsession with narrow selfish goals and re-align ourselves with the fundamental law of the uni-

verse, with the timeless Dhamma. The Buddha teaches that we can only achieve our own true good when we transcend the standpoint of self and set our hearts on the welfare of all. This principle is not the preserve of any particular religion but can be understood by anyone of good will. What Buddhism gives us is a clear-cut path to master ourselves and to bring forth the wisdom and compassion so sorely needed as we enter the new millennium.

Sangha at the Crossroads

There can be little doubt that in Sri Lanka today Buddhism finds itself at a crossroads, its future increasingly in question. The challenge it faces is not one of numbers and power, but of relevance. Not that the Dhamma itself, the Buddha's teaching, has lost its relevance; for neither the shifting drama of history nor the undulating waves of culture can muffle the timeless message embedded in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The problem lies not with the teaching itself, but with those responsible for bringing the teaching to life. What is lacking above all is a combination of skills that can be summed up in three simple words: comprehension, commitment, and translation. *Comprehension*: a clear understanding of how the teaching applies to the hard realities of human life today, to a society and world in which the old certainties of the past are being scattered like leaves before a storm. *Commitment*: the willingness to apply the teachings in the way they were intended, even when this means defying the encrustations of established tradition. *Translation*: not stereotyped "sermons," not sweet consolation, not religious lullabies, but solid, sober explanations of how the timeless principles of the Dhamma can resolve the distinctive problems and quandries of our age.

As we stand at this crossroads looking towards the future, three choices offer themselves to us. One is simply to resign ourselves to the decay of the Sāsana, accepting it as a backward swing of the pendulum of history – sad but inevitable. A

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second is to wring our hands and complain, shifting the responsibility to others – the government, the monks, or the minorities. A third is to ask ourselves what we can do to stem the rising tide. If we adopt the third route we might begin by noting that the Sāsana does not exist in an ideal realm of its own, but only as embodied in the millions of people who call themselves Buddhists and look for refuge to the Triple Gem.

This statement might sound obvious, even trite. However, if we reflect for a few moments we will see that, though obvious, it has enormous implications, for it means that we ourselves are ultimately responsible for the prosperity and decline of the Sāsana: our own views, attitudes, and conduct decide whether the Sāsana is to thrive or wither. To recognize this is to see that the welfare of the Sāsana ultimately rests on our own shoulders, not on some state ministry or ecclesiastical council. Just as the health of the body depends on the vitality of its cells, so the strength of the Sāsana ultimately devolves on ourselves, the cells in the living organism of Buddhism.

In this article I want to focus on one particular constituency of Buddhists in present day Sri Lanka, the Bhikkhu Sangha, the Order of Monks. I intend to examine, though briefly, the problems it faces and its prospects for the future. This task is especially critical because of the central role the Sangha plays in guiding the destiny of the Sāsana, and it is clear that if the Sangha does not learn to deal with the momentous forces inundating present-day society, the future will see it increasingly relegated to the sidelines.

Buddhist tradition meticulously defines the mutual duties of Sangha and laity and these roles form the warp and woof of the Sāsana. The monks are to uphold the teaching by study, practice, preaching, and moral example; the lay people, to support the monks by offering them the four requisites of robes,

food, lodging, and medicines. This intimate relationship between the two communities has provided a stable basis for the persistence of the Sāsana through the centuries. Despite the fluctuations of Buddhist history in Sri Lanka, which at times had sunk so low that even a proper Sangha could not be found, whenever Buddhism thrived the relationship between the monastic order and the laity has been its lifeblood. This relationship of mutual assistance, however, found its supporting matrix in a stable agrarian society with clearly defined social roles and a lifestyle governed by common religious and ethical norms. That is precisely what has altered so radically today. A global culture, driven by exponential technological innovation and a relentless free-market economy, has made its presence felt in every corner of this land, challenging every obstacle to its dominance. In consequence, the entire social order has been shaken by upheavals that reach from the halls of economic and political power right through to the most remote villages and temples.

This modernistic onslaught does not limit itself to mere external triumphs but reaches through to the most private places in our lives: our values, worldviews, and even our sense of personal identity. The result, for the ordinary Buddhist, has been a profound disorientation, a feeling of being stranded in a strange landscape where the old familiar reference points no longer hold. Looking back, we see a past of comfortable certainties that we can never recapture; looking ahead, a future that looks increasingly unpredictable. But amidst the confusion of the present, the Dhamma still appears as a stable reference point that can provide clear answers to our pressing questions and relief from existential stress.

This brings us right to the crux of our problem: the problem of relevance, of conveying the timeless message of the teach-

ing in a language that can address the difficult, unique, complex problems we face navigating our way through the postmodern world. The most critical challenge facing the Sāsana today is that of surviving in this “new world order,” and not merely of surviving institutionally, in name and form, but of contributing to the recovery of universal human values, of helping countless men and women find a way beyond the intellectual and moral abyss. It is precisely here that the role of the Sangha becomes so vitally important, for it is the monks (and, I dare say, the nuns as well) who should be capable of offering a convincing refuge to “a world gone mad” – a vision of basic sanity, selfless goodness, and serenity amidst the storms of greed, conflict, and violence. Yet it is just on this point that we face a gaping chasm: namely, that the Sangha today seems hardly equipped to respond to such a challenge.

What is needed most urgently, in my view, is not a reinforcement of Buddhist religious identity or a governmental policy that gives “pride of place to Buddhism.” Nor will the construction of more Buddha images and the daily broadcasting of *pirit* chanting over the loudspeakers give the Sāsana the infusion of fresh blood it so badly needs. What is required are monks and nuns of intelligence, insight, and sensitivity who can demonstrate, by their lives and characters, the spiritually ennobling and elevating power of the Dhamma. To produce monastics of such calibre is not easy, yet such a task cannot be left to chance. It will require, above all, deep-rooted changes in the entire system of monastic recruitment and education, and thus will call for serious thought and careful planning on the part of the Sangha elders. The task is not one to be taken at all lightly; for one can say, in all truth, that nothing less is at stake than the future of Buddhism in this country.

Just as the Sri Lankan government has recently reviewed

the whole system of secular education in this country with the aim of reforming educational policy, a similar reformation will have to be introduced right at the heart of the Sangha. If one compares the system of instruction in the Buddhist monasteries with the curriculum of the Christian seminaries, the disparity is striking. In the seminaries the future priests and nuns are trained, not only in Latin, theology, and scripture, but in all the fields of modern knowledge they will need to play a leading role in today's world, including the critical and comparative study of religion. In the *pirivenas* or Buddhist monastic schools, so far as I can see, the young monks (never nuns!) are trained to become village priests capable of preserving a religious culture not very different from that of the sixteenth century. One can see the bizarre result when a monk educated in the *pirivena* system has to give a sermon to an audience that might include an astrophysicist, a psychiatrist, several computer analysts, and even some lay Buddhist scholars trained in the methods of critical scholarship. Is it any wonder that the listeners pass the time glancing idly at the ceiling or casting weary smiles at each other?

In what follows I will merely throw out a few random suggestions. A systematic programme would have to be worked out by those more directly involved in Sangha administration and the training of monks and nuns. I will speak about monks rather than nuns, since I am more familiar with their lifestyles and training. But corresponding changes should also be considered for the nuns, whose status, education, and functions require drastic upgrading if Buddhism is to present a respectable face to a world moving rapidly towards complete gender equality.

For the monks, radical change might be needed at the very beginning, in the system of recruitment. The method of recruit-

ment that currently prevails in the Sangha is the induction of young boys who are far from mature enough to make their own decisions. Often they are "offered" to the Sangha by their parents, as a way for the parents to earn merit. If the parents would sacrifice a youth who seems temperamentally inclined to the religious life, the ultimate effect such a system has on the Sāsana might be a positive one. Indeed, in the past it was usually "the best and the brightest" who would be given to the monastery. Today, however, the child selected is too often the one who appears unlikely to succeed in worldly life: the mischiefmaker, the maverick, the dullard.

I am aware that this system of childhood ordination is deeply entrenched in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture, and I would not propose abolishing it. Despite its faults, the system does have its positive points. For one thing, it enables the youngster to enter the path of renunciation before he has been exposed to the temptations of worldly life; thus from an early age it helps promote the inner purity and detachment needed to withstand the rigours of the monastic training. Another advantage is that it gives the young monk the opportunity to study the Dhamma and the textual languages (Pali and Sanskrit) while the mind is as yet fresh, open, receptive, and retentive. Thereby it conduces to the wide erudition which is one of the traditional hallmarks of the cultured monk.

However, while I would not go so far as to suggest abolishing adolescent recruitment, I do think the Sangha could vastly improve its ranks by imposing more stringent criteria for admission. One measure that might be adopted at once is a longer probationary period before granting the novice ordination. For example, it might be made mandatory for boys intent on being ordained to live at training centres as lay postulants for a minimum of two or three years before they are considered eli-

gible for novice ordination. This would give the Sangha elders an opportunity to observe them more closely, in a wide variety of situations, and to screen out those who seem unsuitable for the monk's life. If this is not practicable, then some other selective procedure might be applied. Whatever method is chosen, the standards of selection should be fairly rigorous – though not inhumane – and the elders should not hesitate to turn away unfit applicants. For one thing has become too painfully obvious to all concerned Buddhists alike, and also to non-Buddhists (both residents of Sri Lanka and foreigners) who judge the Dhamma by the conduct of its followers: far too many youngsters are being draped in saffron robes who do not deserve to wear them. Such misfits only sully the good name of the Sangha and of Buddhism itself.

More rigorous screening of candidates for ordination is, however, only a preliminary measure aimed at sealing off the Sangha from those unsuited for the monkhood. What is equally essential is to offer those who do get ordained training programmes that will promote their wholesome, balanced development. This is truly a critical step, for if youngsters with the potential for the monk's life fail to receive proper training they won't find fulfilment in the monastery, and if they don't find fulfilment their future as monks will be in jeopardy. They will either become disillusioned with the Sangha and return to lay life; or else, from fear of the social stigma attached to disrobing, they may continue as monks in a perpetual state of frustration and discontent. This may explain why we see so many younger monks today involved in politics, business, and other activities unworthy of their calling.

What is necessary above all is for the young monk to find meaning and happiness in his chosen path of life, a path that does not offer the immediate satisfactions available to his com-

rades who remain behind in the world. If so few monks today seem to show a real joy in the Dhamma, I suspect this is because the Dhamma is not being presented to them in a way that inspires joy. For the Dhamma to exercise a magnetic power that will draw the young monk ever deeper towards the heart of the holy life, it must address their needs and aspirations at a deep interior level. This means it has to be offered to them in a way that arouses an immediate, sincere, and spontaneous response.

Lay Buddhists often complain about indiscipline in the Sangha and appeal to the Sangha elders to impose stricter controls over their pupils. I do not want to slight the problem of poor discipline, and I agree that stricter enforcement of the Vinaya rules is essential, but I would also contend that poor discipline is more a symptom than a cause. What is primarily required is not so much stricter discipline as a far-reaching spiritual renewal that bubbles with vitality, and such a renewal cannot be instigated merely by imposing stricter disciplinary controls from above. This approach might even turn out to be counter-productive. If not conjoined with other measures designed to effect more fundamental changes in the quality of training it might turn the monastery into an open-door prison, with the monk's life made to feel like a lifetime prison sentence rather than a path to liberation. True discipline must be undertaken freely, with understanding and appreciation, and this can come about only when one sees it as a source of joy and inner freedom, not as a clamp bringing fear and frustration.

If the Sangha is to rediscover its strength and vigour, it is necessary for those who receive ordination to find a meaningful role for themselves in their lives as monks. Such a role has to resolve two contrary demands. On the one side, it must re-

main faithful to the ancient ideals prescribed for the Sangha by the Buddha himself, ideals which express the governing purpose of the monastic vocation. On the other, it must respond to the fluid realities of life in the contemporary world, enabling the monk to feel he has a truly relevant role in relation to the wider community.

This last point is especially important. In present day Sri Lankan society, as I explained earlier, tumultuous changes are taking place on every side, and one of their consequences is to place the monk in an ambiguous position, almost a "double bind." When he reviews his status from the standpoint of the Dhamma he discovers himself to be (in theory at least) the paragon of Buddhist spirituality, a living representative of the *Ariya Sangharatana*, a "field of merit for the world." Yet, when he considers himself in relation to contemporary society, he is made to feel like an anachronism, a relic from an earlier age, and he thus finds his status and function stamped with profoundly disturbing question marks. These contradictory messages can precipitate a state of unbearable inner tension. One outlet from this tension is to accede to the archaic status of the traditionalist and thus become a spokesman of rigid conservatism, stubbornly resistant to change. The other outlet moves in the opposite direction: towards rebellion against all authority, including that of the Dhamma itself.

Precisely this, I believe, underlies the dilemma that confronts so many young, capable, intelligent, and earnest monks once they graduate from novice status and face the prospect of a lifetime commitment to the Sangha. If one listens with one's inner ear, one can hear their questions, rarely expressed, hanging in the air: "Are we to pass our lives as mere symbols on which others can hang their sentimental piety, pushed to the sidelines of a secularized country running in blind pursuit of

economic growth? Are we to spend our days marginalized, engaged in a ritualized routine of endless alms offerings, *pirit* recitations, and *poojas*, functioning as religious decorations in the alcoves of peoples' lives, far removed from 'the real action'? Are we to go on preaching sermons in which we're expected to repeat only what the listeners have already heard a hundred times before, merely to tickle their sense of piety?" The rebellious and recalcitrant behaviour of so many younger monks, I believe, should be read as a silent protest against this fate, a way of saying: "Let us not be fashioned into somebody else's image of what we should be. Let our inalienable humanity not be sacrificed at the altar of social expectations."

If such messages are read correctly, we would see that the appropriate response should not be one of indignation but of compassion and a heartfelt desire to help. Those who wish to help the Sangha must be less quick to criticize and condemn. Instead, they should be ready to make a genuine effort to understand the aspirations of these younger monks and help them find a context giving meaning and value to their lives, confirming the correctness of their decision to ordain. The most important steps will have to be taken by the Sangha elders, who will need to review the whole process of monastic training. But one point should be clearly understood above all else. The quest for a meaningful role in relation to present-day society should never be used by the monk to justify adopting a lifestyle that betrays his special calling. This means that the monk must not seek to make his mark on society as a political activist caught in the interminable conflicts of party politics, nor should he be turned into a tonsured social worker or a specialist in worldly arts and sciences. The defining characteristic of the monk's life is renunciation, and this should never be undermined by a concern to find a relevant role in society.

If properly undertaken, the life of renunciation is sufficiently relevant on its own: a perpetual reminder of where the true good for human beings is to be found.

Perhaps the best way to gain an insight into the kind of changes needed in the system of monastic training is to pose the question: "What is the role the monk should fulfil once he reaches maturity?" And this leads on to the next question: "What is the proper aim and purpose of the monk's life?" A meaningful programme of monastic education, which is at the same time a programme of monastic formation, should be formulated as answers to these questions.

When we look at the whole situation of Sri Lankan monasticism, we see that with a few noteworthy exceptions the monastic training in this country is sadly deficient. What underlies this deficiency is the lack of a clear conception of a monk's special vocation. Admittedly, in a country where some seventy percent of the population is Buddhist, monks are needed to cater to the religious needs of the people. But, we have to ask, does this justify the almost complete neglect of the unique system of spiritual training prescribed by the Buddha for the Sangha? Did he intend the Order to consist entirely of ritual specialists and cultural custodians, and to postpone the treading of his path to liberation to some future existence? To arrive at a correct conception of the goal of monastic training we have to pierce through the established social norms and popular conventions that govern Sangha life today, not stopping until we have recovered the original conception of the monastic calling sounded by the Buddha himself. It is this conception that must be drawn out from the massive volumes of Buddhist scriptures, rejuvenated with a breath of fresh air, and placed before the monk's inner eye as the real reason for his vocation.

It is towards the realization of this ideal that the monastic training should be directed. To work out the details of this is a task that must be given a great amount of careful and intelligent thought. Here I can only speak in generalities. The first, and overriding generality, is to recognize that the primary purpose behind the monastic path is personal growth and spiritual transformation in the direction pointed to by the Buddha: growth towards Nibbāna, final liberation from suffering; transformation guided by the clear-cut steps of the Noble Eightfold Path. Stated so baldly, however, this expression of the goal may be too abstract, too remote from the everyday concerns and aptitudes of a young monk who is just setting out in his training. So let us put it differently, into a language that is more immediate and concrete: The purpose of the monk's life is to train the mind, to purify the mind, to mould the mind in the direction of liberation from greed, aversion, and delusion; to implant in the mind the purifying qualities of detachment, loving kindness, compassion, and wisdom, and to share these aspirations with others. Whatever mode of expression is chosen is of secondary importance. What is of primary importance is a clear recognition that the guiding purpose of the monk's life should be the spiritual growth and self-transformation of the individual monk, and all other aspects of the training should be subsumed under this.

To follow through such a suggestion will require that the Sangha rediscover a discipline that has almost been lost, namely, the practice of meditation. Meditation, the methodical development of tranquillity and insight, was the original lifeblood of the renunciant life, yet for most monks today it has become only a word, perhaps a topic of sermons and seminars, or a ten-minute silence in the daily devotional service. In my view, a monastic life that does not centre upon the practice

of meditation is merely a shadow of the genuine monastic calling, an evasion of the task entrusted to the Sangha by the Awakened One.

I am aware that not all who go forth are capable of a life of full-time meditation, and I certainly would not propose that all monks be obliged to follow such a lifestyle. Few in fact will be able to find happiness in a life devoted solely to contemplation, and throughout its long history the Sangha has had the flexibility necessary to accommodate members of diverse skills and temperaments. Within the Sangha there must be administrators, scholars, teachers, preachers, social advisers, counselors, ritual specialists, and others, and the monastic training must prepare monks to fill these varied niches – what the Christian monastic tradition calls the “active vocations.” The more intellectually inclined monks must also be exposed to the various branches of modern knowledge which will enable him to establish bridges between the Dhamma and the intellectual advance of humankind: philosophy and psychology, comparative religion, history and literature and art. But for the monastic life to remain faithful to its original calling the practice of meditation must be restored to its rightful place: not at the fringes but at the centre.

The meditative life, however, must also be integrated with a wider sense of the universal, social message of the Dhamma; otherwise it can become self-enclosed and stagnant. In fact, one of the most regrettable turns taken in the historical evolution of Theravada Buddhism, not confined to Sri Lanka but quite pervasive here, has been the sharp division of the Sangha into meditating forest monks and non-meditating town-and-village monks. This fissure has deprived both groups of the healthy balance needed to make the Dhamma a spiritually nourishing force both in this country and in the wider world.

The forest monks live almost entirely aloof from society, and thus, except by silent example, rarely contribute their meditative insights and refined moral sensitivity to resolving the profound ethical and spiritual dilemmas confronting the broader human community. Responsibility for upholding the social and communal dimension of Buddhist life devolves on the active town-and-village monks, who are only too prone to assume the role of custodians of a particular social and ethnic consciousness.

Today it isn't only Buddhism in Sri Lanka that is at the crossroads, but the Sangha as well, and the direction it takes will determine the future destiny of the Sāsana. The challenges of our age are unique and unprecedented, and they require intelligent responses governed by the wide, profound perspectives of the Dhamma. Mechanical repetition of the formulas of the past simply won't work. If the Sangha continues to adhere unthinkingly to established, self-stultifying structures and does not take up the urgent task of internal criticism and renewal, it will be condemning itself, and Sri Lankan Buddhism, to irrelevance. For both alert lay Buddhists and the world community as a whole, it will be just another antiquated institution struggling to hang on to its privileges. Today a cloud of moral and spiritual confusion hangs over humankind, a cloud that grows increasingly darker and thicker. It is the true task of the Sangha, and of Buddhism itself, to help dispel this confusion with the Buddha's own boundless wisdom and compassion. But if the Sangha is to rise up to this challenge, it must be ready to make some radical changes in its own system of recruitment, training, and practice. True, this will be a difficult task, but it is one that must be met.

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PATICCASAMUPPÁDA

By Nanavira

In spite of the venerable tradition, starting with the Patisambhidámagga (or perhaps the Abhidhamma Pitaka) and continued in all the Commentaries (see Anguttara V,viii,9 <A.iii,107,§4>), *paticcasamuppáda* has nothing to do with temporal succession (cause-and-effect). Precedence in *paticcasamuppáda* is structural, not temporal: *paticcasamuppáda* is not the description of a *process*. For as long as *paticcasamuppáda* is thought to involve temporal succession (as it is, notably, in the traditional 'three-life' interpretation), so long is it liable to be regarded as some kind of hypothesis (that there is re-birth and that it is *caused* by *avijjá*) to be verified (or not) in the course of time (like any hypothesis of the natural sciences), and so long are people liable to think that the necessary and sufficient criterion of a 'Buddhist'[a] is the acceptance of this hypothesis on trust (for no hypothesis can be known to be certainly true, since upon the next occasion it may fail to verify itself). But the Buddha tells us (Majjhima iv,8 <M.i,265>) that *paticcasamuppáda* is

sanditthiko akáliko ehipassiko opanayiko immediate, timeless, evident, leading, to be
paccattam veditabbo viññúhi. known privately by the wise.

What temporal succession is *akálika*? (See CITTA [a].) For an *ariyasávaka*, *paticcasamuppáda* is a matter of direct reflexive certainty: the *ariyasávaka* has direct, certain, reflexive knowledge of the condition upon which *birth* depends. He has no such knowledge about *re-birth*, which is quite a different matter. He knows for himself that *avijjá* is the condition for birth; but he does not know for himself that when there is *avijjá* there is *re-birth*. (That there *is* *re-birth*, i.e. *samsára*, may remain, even for the *ariyasávaka*, a matter of trust in the Buddha.) The *ariyasávaka* knows for himself that even in this very life the *arahat* is, actually, not to be found (cf. Khandha Samy. ix,3 <S.iii,109-15> and see PARAMATTHA SACCA [a]), and that it is wrong to say that the *arahat* 'was born' or 'will die'. With *sakkáyanirodha* there is no longer any 'somebody' (or a person -- *sakkáya*, q.v.) to whom the words *birth* and *death* can apply. They apply, however, to the *puthujjana*, who still 'is somebody'. [b] But to endow his birth with a condition in the past -- i.e. a *cause* -- is to accept this 'somebody' at its face value as a permanent 'self'; for cessation of birth requires cessation of its condition, which, being safely *past* (in the preceding life), cannot *now* be brought to an end; and this 'somebody' cannot therefore *now* cease. Introduction of this idea into *paticcasamuppáda* infects the *samudayasacca* with *sassataditthi* and the *nirodhasacca* with *ucchedaditthi*. Not surprisingly, the result is hardly coherent. And to make matters worse, most of the terms -- and notably *sankhára* (q.v.) -- have been misconceived by the Visuddhimagga.

It is sometimes thought possible to modify this interpretation of *paticcasamuppáda*, confining its application to the present life. Instead of *temporal succession* we have *continuous becoming*, conceived as a *flux*, where the effect cannot be clearly distinguished from the cause -- the cause *becomes* the effect. But this does not get rid of the temporal element, and the concept of a flux raises its own difficulties. [c]

The problem lies in the *present*, which is always with us; and any attempt to consider past or future without first settling the present problem can only beg the question -- 'self' is either asserted or denied, or both, or both assertion and denial are denied, all of which take it for granted (see NA CA SO). Any interpretation of *patikkasamuppáda* that involves time is an attempt to resolve the present problem by referring to past or future, and is therefore *necessarily* mistaken. The argument that both past and future exist in the present (which, in a certain sense, is correct) does not lead to the resolution of the problem.

Footnotes:

[a] To be a follower of the Buddha it is certainly *necessary* to accept on trust that for one who is not rid of *avijjá* at his death there is re-birth, but it is by no means *sufficient*. What is sufficient is to see *patikkasamuppáda* --

Yo patikkasamuppádam passati so dhammam passati He who sees dependent arising sees the Teaching.

(Majjhima iii,8 <M.i,191>). For those who cannot *now* see the re-birth that is at every moment awaiting beings with *avijjá*, the dependence of re-birth on *avijjá* must be accepted on trust. They cannot get beyond temporal succession in this matter and must take it on trust that it is a question of dependence (and not of cause-and-effect) -- i.e. that it is *not* a hypothesis at all, but (for the Buddha) a matter of certainty. But accepting this on trust is not the same as seeing *patikkasamuppáda*. (*Past* and *future* only make their appearance with *anvaye ñánam* [see NA CA SO [a]], not with *dhamme ñánam*. 'As it is, so it was, so it will be.' *Patikkasamuppáda* is just 'As it is' -- i.e. the *present* structure of dependence.) [[Back to text](#)]

[b] So long as there are the thoughts 'I was born', 'I shall die', there is birth and death: so long as the five *khandhá* are *sa-upádáná*, 'somebody' becomes manifest and breaks up. [[Back to text](#)]

[c] The notion of *flux* can be expressed thus: $A = B, B = C, A \neq C$, where A, B, and C, are consecutive (Poincaré's definition of continuity). This contradiction can only be concealed by verbal legerdemain. (The origin of this misleading notion, as of so many others in the traditional interpretation, seems to be the Milindapañha, which, to judge by its simile of the flame, intends its formula *na ca so na ca añño* to be understood as describing continuous change.) The misunderstanding arises from failure to see that change at any given level of generality *must* be discontinuous and absolute, and that there *must* be different levels of generality. When these are taken together, any desired approximation to 'continuous change' can be obtained without contradiction. But change, as marking 'the passage of time', is no more than change of aspect or orientation: change of substance is not *necessary*, nor is movement. (See ANICCA [a], CITTA [a], & FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE.) Kierkegaard (*op. cit.*, p. 277) points out that Heraclitus, who summed up his doctrine of universal flux in the celebrated dictum that one cannot pass through the same river twice, had a disciple who remarked that one

cannot pass through the same river even once. If everything is changing, there is no change at all.

The assumption of a single absolute time, conceived as a uniform continuity (or flux) of instants, leads at once to a very common misconception of the Dhamma:

- A. Even if I *now* perceive things as self-identically persisting in time, my present perception is only one out of a flux or continuous succession of perceptions, and there is no guarantee that I continue to perceive the *same* self-identities for two successive instants. All I am therefore entitled to say is that there *appear* to be self-identities persisting in time; but whether it is so or not *in reality* I am quite unable to discover.
- B. The Buddha's teachings of impermanence and not-self answer this question in the negative: In reality no things exist, and if they appear to do so that is because of my ignorance of these teachings (which is *avijjā*).

But we may remark: (i) That A is the result of taking presumptively the rational view of time, and using it to question the validity of direct reflexive experience. But the rational view of time is itself derived, ultimately, from direct reflexive experience -- how can we know about time at all, if not from experience? --, and it is quite illegitimate to use it to dig away its own foundations. The fault is in the act of rationalization, in the attempt to see time from a point outside it; and the result -- a *continuous* succession of *isolated* instants each of no duration and without past or future (from a timeless point of view they are *all* present) -- is a monster. The distinction in A (as everywhere else) between 'appearance' and 'reality' is wholly spurious. (ii) That since our knowledge of time comes only from perception of change, the nature of change must be determined before we can know the structure of time. We have, therefore, no antecedent reason -- if we do not actually encounter the thing itself -- for entertaining the self-contradictory idea (see Poincaré above) of continuous change. (iii) That, whether or not we do actually perceive continuous change, we certainly perceive discontinuous changes (so much is admitted by A), and there is thus a *prima-facie* case at least in favour of the latter. (iv) That the experiments of the Gestalt psychologists indicate that, in fact, we perceive only discontinuous changes, not continuous change (cf. Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 190). (v) That if, nevertheless, we say that we do at times and in the normal way have intuitive experience, distinct and unambiguous, of continuous change, and if we also say that continuous change, in accordance with B, is what is meant by the teaching of impermanence, then it will follow that at such times we must enjoy a direct view of 'reality' and be free from *avijjā*. Why, then, should we need a Buddha to tell us these things? But if we reject the first premiss we shall have no longer any grounds for having to assert a uniformly continuous time, and if we reject the second we shall have no longer any grounds for wishing to assert it. (On the question of self-identity, see ATTÁ.)

Our undeniable experience of movement and similar things (e.g. the fading of lights) will no doubt be adduced as evidence of continuous change -- indeed, it will be said that they *are* continuous change. That movement is evidence of what it is, is quite certain; but it is not so certain that it is evidence of continuous change. We may understand movement as, at each level of generality, a succession of contiguous fixed finite *trajectories* (to borrow

Sartre's expression), and each such trajectory, at the next lower level, as a relatively faster succession of lesser trajectories, and so on indefinitely. But, as discussed in FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE [h], our ability to perceive distinctions is limited, and this hierarchy of trajectories is anomalously apprehended as a series of discrete continuities of displacement -- which is, precisely, what we are accustomed to call *movement*. In other words, it is only where our power of discrimination leaves off that we start talking about 'continuous change'. (Consideration of the mechanism of the cinematograph -- see the foregoing reference -- is enough to show that continuous change cannot safely be inferred from the experience of movement; but it must not be supposed that the structure of movement can be reduced simply to the structure of the cinematograph film. See also FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE [m.]) [[Back to text](#)]

Once the Auspicious One was staying near Rájagaha, at the Squirrel's feeding-ground in the Bamboo Grove.

Now at that time the Wanderer Sívaka of the top knot approached the Auspicious One. Having approached, he exchanged courtesies and, having done so, sat down at one side. Sitting at one side the Wanderer Sívaka of the top knot said this to the Auspicious One:

-- There are some recluses and divines, Master Gotama, of such a belief, of such a view: 'Whatever this individual experiences, be it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, all that is due to former actions.' Herein what does Master Gotama say?

-- Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (1) *with bile as their source*. That can be known by oneself, Sívaka, how some feelings arise here with bile as their source; and that is reckoned by the world as truth, Sívaka, how some feelings arise here with bile as their source. Therein, Sívaka, the recluses and divines who are of such a belief, of such a view: 'Whatever this individual experiences, be it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, all that is due to former actions', they both go beyond what is known by themselves and go beyond what is reckoned as truth in the world. Therefore I say that these recluses and divines are in the wrong.

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (2) *with phlegm as their source*....

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (3) *with wind as their source*....

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (4) *due to confluence of humours*....

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (5) *born from seasonal change*....

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (6) *born from improper care*....

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (7) *due to exertion*....

Some feelings, Sívaka, arise here (8) *born from the ripening of action*.... Therefore I say that these recluses and divines are in the wrong.

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1. A NOTE ON PATICCASAMUPPÁDA



Api c'Udāyi tittathu pubbanto tittathu aparanto, dhammam te desessāmi: Imasmim sati idam hoti, imass'uppádā idam uppajjati; imasmim asati idam na hoti, imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati ti.
Majjhima viii,9 <M.ii,32>

But, Udāyi, let be the past, let be the future, I shall set you forth the Teaching: When there is this this is, with arising of this this arises; when there is not this this is not, with cessation of this this ceases.

Imasmim sati idam hoti, imass'uppádā idam uppajjati; yadidam avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhārapaccayā viññānam, viññānapaccayā nāmarūpam, nāmarūpaccayā salāyatanaṃ, salāyatanaṃ phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā tanhā, tanhāpaccayā upādānam, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaranam sokaparidevadukkhadomanass' upāyāsā sambhavanti; evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

When there is this this is, with arising of this this arises; that is to say, with nescience as condition, determinations; with determinations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, name-&-matter; with name-&-matter as condition, six bases; with six bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, holding; with holding as condition, being; with being as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, come into being; thus is the arising of this whole mass of unpleasure (suffering).

Imasmim asati idam na hoti, imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati; yadidam avijjānirodhā sankhāranirodho, sankhāranirodhā viññānanirodho, viññānanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā salāyatananirodho, salāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā tanhānirodho, tanhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaranam sokaparidevadukkhadomanass' upāyāsā nirujjhanti; evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti.
Majjhima iv,8 <M.i,262-3 & 264>

When there is not this this is not, with cessation of this this ceases; that is to say, with cessation of nescience, ceasing of determinations; with cessation of determinations, ceasing of consciousness; with cessation of consciousness, ceasing of name-&-matter; with cessation of name-&-matter, ceasing of six bases; with cessation of six bases, ceasing of contact; with cessation of contact, ceasing of feeling; with cessation of feeling, ceasing of craving; with cessation of craving, ceasing of holding; with cessation of holding, ceasing of being; with cessation of being, ceasing of birth; with cessation of birth, ageing-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, cease; thus is the ceasing of this whole mass of unpleasure (suffering).

1. The traditional interpretation of *paticcasamuppāda* (of its usual twelve-factored formulation, that is to say) apparently has its roots in the Patisambhidāmagga <i,52>, or perhaps in the Abhidhammapitaka. This interpretation is fully expounded in the Visuddhimagga <Ch. XVII>. It can be briefly summarized thus: *avijjā* and *sankhārā* are *kamma* in the *previous* existence, and their *vipāka* is *viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, *salāyatana*, *phassa*, and *vedanā*, in the *present* existence; *tanhā*, *upādāna*, and *bhava*, are *kamma* in the *present* existence, and their *vipāka* is *jāti* and *jarāmarana* in the *subsequent* existence.

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2. This Note will take for granted first, that the reader is acquainted with this traditional interpretation, and secondly, that he is dissatisfied with it. It is not therefore proposed to enter into a detailed discussion of this interpretation, but rather to indicate briefly that dissatisfaction with it is not unjustified, and then to outline what may perhaps be found to be a more satisfactory approach.

3. As the traditional interpretation has it, *vedanā* is *kammavipāka*. Reference to *Vedanā Samy.* iii,2 <S.iv,230> will show that as far as concerns bodily feeling (with which the Sutta is evidently dealing) there are seven reasons for it that are specifically not *kammavipāka*. Only in the eighth place do we find *kammavipākajā vedanā*. This would at once limit the application of *patīccasamuppāda* to certain bodily feelings only and would exclude others, if the traditional interpretation is right. Some of these bodily feelings would be *patīccasamuppāda*, but not all; and this would hardly accord with, for example, the passage:

*Patīccasamuppānam kho āvuso sukhadukkhā vuttam
Bhagavatā* (Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. iii,5 <S.ii,38>).

The Auspicious One, friend, has said that pleasure and unpleasure are dependently arisen.

4. There is, however, a more serious difficulty regarding feeling. In *Anguttara* III,vii,1 <A.i,176> it is clear that *somanassa*, *domanassa*, and *upekkhā*, are included in *vedanā*, in the specific context of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation. But these three feelings are mental, and arise (as the Sutta tells us) when the mind dwells upon (*upavicarati*) some object; thus they involve *cetanā*, 'intention', in their very structure. And the Commentary to the Sutta would seem to allow this, but in doing so must either exclude these mental feelings from *vedanā* in the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation or else assert that they are *vipāka*. In either case the Commentary would go against the Sutta we are considering. This Sutta (which should be studied at first hand) not only treats these mental feelings as included in *vedanā* but also specifically states that to hold the view that whatever a man experiences, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, is due to past acts, is to adopt a form of determinism making present action futile -- one is a killer on account of past acts, a thief on account of past acts, and so on. To take these mental feelings as *vipāka* would be to fall into precisely this wrong view; and, in fact, the traditional interpretation, rather than that, prefers to exclude them from *patīccasamuppāda*, at least as *vedanā* (see *Visuddhimagga*, *loc. cit.*). Unfortunately for the traditional interpretation there are Suttas (e.g. *Majjhima* i,9 <M.i,53> [1]) that define the *patīccasamuppāda* item *nāmarūpa* -- also traditionally taken as *vipāka* -- in terms of (amongst other things) not only *vedanā* but also *cetanā*, and our Commentary is obliged to speak of a *vipākācetanā*. But the Buddha has said (*Anguttara* VI,vi,9 <A.iii,415> [2]) that *kamma* is *cetanā* (action is intention), and the notion of *vipākācetanā*, consequently, is a plain self-contradiction. (It needs, after all, only a moment's reflection to see that if, for example, the pleasant feeling that I experience when I indulge in lustful thoughts is the *vipāka* of some past *kamma*, then I have no present responsibility in the matter and can now do nothing about it. But I know from my own experience that this is not so; if I choose to enjoy pleasure by thinking lustful thoughts I can do so, and I can also choose [if I see good reason] to refrain from thinking such thoughts.)[a]

5. Let us now consider *sankhārā*, which we shall make no attempt to translate for the moment so as not to beg the question. We may turn to *Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy.* i,2 <S.ii,4> for a definition of *sankhārā* in the context of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation.

*Katame ca bhikkhave sankhārā. Tayo'me
bhikkhave sankhārā, kāyasankhāro
vacīsanxhāro cittasankhāro. Ime vuccanti
bhikkhave sankhārā.*

And which, monks, are determinations? There are, monks, these three determinations: body-determination, speech-determination, mind-determination. These, monks, are called determinations.

But what are *kāyasankhāra*, *vacīsanxhāra*, and *cittasankhāra*? The *Cūlavēdallasutta* (*Majjhima* v,4 <M.i,301> & cf. *Citta Samy.* 6 <S.iv,293>) will tell us.

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Kāti paṇ'āyḃe saṅkhārá ti. Tayo'me āvuso Visákha saṅkhārá, kāyasankháro vacísankháro cittasankháro ti. Katamo paṇ'āyḃe kāyasankháro, katamo vacísankháro, katamo cittasankháro ti. Assásapassásá kho āvuso Visákha kāyasankháro, vitakkavicārá vacísankháro, saññá ca vedaná ca cittasankháro ti. Kasmá paṇ'āyḃe assásapassásá kāyasankháro, kasmá vitakkavicārá vacísankháro, kasmá saññá ca vedaná ca cittasankháro ti. Assásapassásá kho āvuso Visákha kāyiká, ete dhammá kāyapatibaddhá, tasmá assásapassásá kāyasankháro. Pubbe kho āvuso Visákha vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchá vācam bhīndati, tasmá vitakkavicārá vacísankháro. Saññá ca vedaná ca cetasiká, ete dhammá cittapatibaddhá, tasmá saññá ca vedaná ca cittasankháro ti.

-- But, lady, how many determinations are there? -- There are, friend Visákha, these three determinations: body-determination, speech-determination, mind-determination. -- But which, lady, is body-determination, which is speech-determination, which is mind-determination? -- The in-&-out-breaths, friend Visákha, are body-determination, thinking-&-pondering are speech-determination, perception and feeling are mind-determination. -- But why, lady, are the in-&-out-breaths body-determination, why are thinking-&-pondering speech-determination, why are perception and feeling mind-determination? -- The in-&-out-breaths, friend Visákha, are bodily, these things are bound up with the body; that is why the in-&-out-breaths are body-determination. First, friend Visákha, having thought and pondered, afterwards one breaks into speech; that is why thinking-&-pondering are speech-determination. Perception and feeling are mental, these things are bound up with the mind; that is why perception and feeling are mind-determination.

Now the traditional interpretation says that *saṅkhārá* in the *patīccasamuppāda* context are *kamma*, being *cetaná*. Are we therefore obliged to understand in-&-out-breaths, thinking-&-pondering, and perception and feeling, respectively, as bodily, verbal, and mental *kamma* (or *cetaná*)? Is my present existence the result of my breathing in the preceding existence? Is thinking-&-pondering *verbal* action? Must we regard perception and feeling as intention, when the Suttas distinguish between them

(Phuttho bhikkhave vedeti, phuttho ceteti, phuttho sañjānāti...

(Contacted, monks, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives;...)

[Salāyatana Samy. ix,10 <S.iv,68>]? Certainly, *saṅkhārá* may, upon occasion, be *cetaná* (e.g. Khandha Samy. vi,4 <S.iii,60> [3]); but this is by no means always so. The Cūlavēdallasutta tells us clearly in what sense in-&-out-breaths, thinking-&-pondering, and perception and feeling, are *saṅkhārá* (i.e. in that body, speech, and mind [*citta*], are intimately connected with them, and do not occur without them); and it would do violence to the Sutta to interpret *saṅkhārá* here as *cetaná*.

6. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to suppose from the foregoing that *saṅkhārá* in the *patīccasamuppāda* context *cannot* mean *cetaná*. One Sutta (Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. vi,1 <S.ii,82>) gives *saṅkhārá* in this context as *puññābhisaṅkhāra*, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra*, and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*, and it is clear enough that we *must* understand *saṅkhārá* here as some kind of *cetaná*. Indeed, it is upon this very Sutta that the traditional interpretation relies to justify its conception of *saṅkhārá* in the context of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation. It might be wondered how the traditional interpretation gets round the difficulty of explaining *assásapassásá*, *vitakkavicārá*, and *saññá* and *vedaná*, as *cetaná*, in defiance of the Cūlavēdallasutta passage. The answer is simple: the traditional interpretation, choosing to identify *cittasankhára* with *manosaṅkhāra*, roundly asserts (in the Visuddhimagga) that *kāyasankhára*, *vacísankhára*, and *cittasankhára*, are *kāyasañcetaná*, *vacísañcetaná*, and *manosañcetaná*, -- see §16 --, and altogether ignores the Cūlavēdallasutta. The difficulty is thus, discreetly, not permitted to arise.

7. No doubt more such specific inadequacies and inconsistencies in the traditional interpretation of *patīccasamuppāda* could be found, but since this is not a polemic we are not concerned to seek them out. There remains, however, a reason for dissatisfaction with the general manner of this interpretation. The Buddha has said (Majjhima iii,8 <M.i,191>) that he who sees the Dhamma sees *patīccasamuppāda*, and he has also said that the Dhamma is *sandīthika* and *akālika*, that it is immediately visible and without involving time (see in particular Majjhima iv,8 <M.i,265>). Now it is evident that the twelve items, *avijjā* to *jarāmarana*, cannot, if the traditional interpretation is correct, all be seen at once; for they are spread over three

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successive existences. I may, for example, see present *viññāna* to *vedanā*, but I cannot *now* see the *kamma* of the *past* existence -- *avijjā* and *sankhāra*-- that (according to the traditional interpretation) was the cause of these present things. Or I may see *tanhā* and so on, but I cannot *now* see the *jāti* and *jarāmarana* that will result from these things in the *next* existence. And the situation is no better if it is argued that since all twelve items are present in each existence it is possible to see them all at once. It is, no doubt, true that all these things can be seen at once, but the *avijjā* and *sankhāra* that I *now* see are the cause (says the traditional interpretation) of *viññāna* to *vedanā* in the *next* existence, and have no causal connexion with the *viññāna* to *vedanā* that I *now* see. In other words, the relation *sankhārapaccayā viññānam* cannot be seen in either case. The consequence of this is that the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation (if the traditional interpretation is correct) is something that, in part at least, must be taken on trust. And even if there is memory of the past existence the situation is still unsatisfactory, since memory is not on the same level of certainty as present reflexive experience. Instead of *imass'uppādā idam uppajjati, imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*, 'with arising of this this arises, with cessation of this this ceases', the traditional interpretation says, in effect, *imassa nirodhā idam uppajjati*, 'with cessation of this, this arises'. It is needless to press this point further: either the reader will already have recognized that this is, for him, a valid objection to the traditional interpretation, or he will not. And if he has not already seen this as an objection, no amount of argument will open his eyes. It is a matter of one's fundamental attitude to one's own existence -- is there, or is there not, a *present* problem or, rather, *anxiety* that can only be resolved *in the present*?

8. If *patīccasamuppāda* is *sanditthika* and *akālika* then it is clear that it can have nothing to do with *kamma* and *kammavipāka* -- at least in their usual sense of ethical action and its eventual retribution (see KAMMA) --; for the ripening of *kamma* as *vipāka* takes *time* -- *vipāka* always follows *kamma* after an interval and is never simultaneous with it. It will at once be evident that if an interpretation of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation can be found that does not involve *kamma* and *vipāka* the difficulties raised in §§3&4 will vanish; for we shall no longer be called upon to decide whether *vedanā* is, or is not, *kamma* or *vipāka*, and there will be no need for such contradictions as *vipākacetanā*. Irrespective of whether or not it is either *kamma* or *vipāka*, *vedanā* will be *patīccasamuppāna*. We shall also find that the apparent conflict of §§5&6 disappears; for when *sankhāra*, as the second item of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation, is no longer necessarily to be regarded as *kamma*, we shall be free to look for a meaning of the word *sankhāra* that can comfortably accommodate the *kāya-*, *vacī-*, and *citta-sankhāra* of the Cūlavedallasutta, as well as the *puñña-*, *apuñña-*, and *āneñja-abhisankhāra* of Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. vi,1. (We may note in passing that though *kamma* is *cetanā* -- action is intention -- we are in no way obliged, when we deal with *cetanā*, to think in terms of *kamma* and its eventual *vipāka*. Present *cetanā* is structurally inseparable from present *saññā* and present *vedanā*, and thoughts about the future are quite irrelevant to the *present* problem of suffering --

Yam kiñci vedayitam tam dukkhasmin ti
[Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. iv,2 <S.ii,53>].[b])

Whatever is felt counts as unpleasure (suffering).
[See Vedanā Samy. ii,1, quoted in NIBBĀNA.]

9. It will be convenient to start at the end of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation and to discuss *jāti* and *jarāmarana* first. To begin with, *jāti* is 'birth' and not 're-birth'. 'Re-birth' is *punabbhavābhinibbatti*, as in Majjhima v,3 <M.i,294> where it is said that future 'birth into renewed existence' comes of *avijjā* and *tanhā*, and it is clear that, here, two successive existences are involved. It is, no doubt, possible for a Buddha to see the re-birth that is *at each moment* awaiting a living individual who still has *tanhā* -- the re-birth, that is to say, that is *now* awaiting the individual *who* now has *tanhā*. If this is so, then for a Buddha the dependence of re-birth upon *tanhā* is a matter of direct seeing, not involving time. But this is by no means always possible (if, indeed, at all) for an *ariyasāvaka*, who, though he sees *patīccasamuppāda* for himself, and with certainty (it is *aparapaccayā ñānam*), may still need to accept re-birth on the Buddha's authority.[c] In other words, an *ariyasāvaka* sees *birth* with direct vision (since *jāti* is part of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation), but does not necessarily see *re-birth* with direct vision. It is obvious, however, that *jāti* does not refer straightforwardly to the *ariyasāvaka*'s own physical birth into his present existence; for that at best could only be a memory, and it is probably not remembered at all. How, then, is *jāti* to be understood?



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[Next section](#)[Back to A Note on Patīccasamuppāda - Contents](#)[Back to Clearing the Path - Contents](#)[Back to Ñānavīra Thera Dhamma Page](#)**Footnotes:**

[a] A present intention (or action) is certainly *determined*, but it is determined by a superior (or more reflexive) intention that *also* is present: it is, therefore, not *pre*-determined. (To be future is essentially to be under-determined. See FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE.) Every voluntary (or reflexive) intention (i.e. every volition or act of will) is perpetually revocable, and every involuntary (or immediate) intention (i.e. every inclination or tendency) is voluntarily modifiable. (There is a mistaken idea, common [and convenient] enough, that our inclinations are in the nature of impulses to which we can only submit, rather as a stone passively suffers the pressure that moves it. But, far from being an imposition that must be passively suffered, an inclination is an active seeking of a still only *possible* state of affairs. Cf. '*D'ailleurs, si l'acte n'est pas pur mouvement, il doit se définir par une intention. De quelque manière que l'on considère cette intention, elle ne peut être qu'un dépassement du donné vers un résultat à obtenir. ...Lorsque les psychologues, par exemple, font de la tendance un état de fait, ils ne voient pas qu'ils lui ôtent tout caractère d'appétit [ad-petitio].*' --- J.-P. Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant*, Gallimard, Paris 1943, p. 556. ['Besides, if the act is not pure *movement*, it must be defined by an *intention*. In whatever way we may consider this intention, it can only be a passing beyond the given towards a result to be obtained. ...When the psychologists, for example, turn tendency into a state of fact, they fail to see that they are taking away from it all character of *appetite* <*ad-petitio*> .']) Cf. CETANĀ [e]. [Back to text]

[b] The anguish of the moment when a man apprehends that he is going to die is evidence of this perpetually present *sankhāradukkha* (see Vedanā Samy. ii,1, quoted in NIBBĀNA), and has to do with the changing joys and miseries of this life only in so far as they are, in fact, *changing*. [cf.17] It is this anguish that makes deliberate suicide, even if it is to be painless, such a difficult enterprise. Only the *arahat* has no anguish in the face of death:

<i>Nābhinandāmi maranam</i>	I delight not in death,	606
<i>nābhinandāmi jīvitam,</i>	I delight not in life,	
<i>Kālañ ca patikankhāmi</i>	I await my time	
<i>nibbisam bhatako yathā;</i>	like a hireling his wage;	
<i>Nābhinandāmi maranam</i>	I delight not in death,	607
<i>nābhinandāmi jīvitam,</i>	I delight not in life,	
<i>Kālañ ca patikankhāmi</i>	I await my time	
<i>sampajāno patissato.</i>	composed and aware.	

Theragāthā vv. 606 & 607.

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[c] This, naturally, is not to be taken as denying the possibility of evidence for re-birth quite independent of

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what is said in the Suttas. (A curious view, that the Buddha was an agnostic on the question of re-birth and refused to pronounce on it, seems to be gaining currency. Even a very slight acquaintance with the Suttas will correct this idea. See e.g. Majjhima ii,2 <M.i,73-7>.) [Back to text]

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10. *Upádánapaccayá bhavo; bhavapaccayá jāti; jātippaccayá jarámaranam...*

With holding as condition, being; with being as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing-&-death...

The fundamental *upádána* or 'holding' is *attaváda* (see Majjhima ii,1 <M.i,67>), which is holding a belief in 'self'. The *puthujjana* takes what appears to be his 'self' at its face value; and so long as this goes on he continues to *be* a 'self', at least in his own eyes (and in those of others like him). This is *bhava* or 'being'. The *puthujjana* knows that people are born and die; and since he thinks 'my self exists' so he also thinks 'my self was born' and 'my self will die'. The *puthujjana* sees a 'self' to whom the words *birth* and *death* apply.[d] In contrast to the *puthujjana*, the *arahat* has altogether got rid of *asmimána* (not to speak of *attaváda* -- see MAMA), and does not even think 'I am'. This is *bhavanirodha*, cessation of being. And since he does not think 'I am' he also does not think 'I was born' or 'I shall die'. In other words, he sees no 'self' or even 'I' for the words *birth* and *death* to apply to. This is *játinirodha* and *jarámarananirodha*. (See, in Kosala Samy. i,3 <S.i,71>, how the words *birth* and *death* are avoided when the *arahat* is spoken of.

Atthi nu kho bhante jātassa aññātra jarámaraná ti. N'atthi kho mahárája jātassa aññātrá jarámaraná. Ye pi te mahárája khattiyamahásálá... bráhmanamahásálá... gahapatimahásálá..., tesam pi jātánam n'atthi aññātra jarámaraná. Ye pi te mahárája bhikkhu arahanto khínásavá..., tesam páyam káyo bhedanadhammo nikkhepanadhammo ti.)

-- For one who is born, lord, is there anything other than ageing-&-death? -- For one who is born, great king, there is nothing other than ageing-&-death. Those, great king, who are wealthy warriors... wealthy divines... wealthy householders..., -- for them, too, being born, there is nothing other than ageing-&-death. Those monks, great king, who are worthy ones, destroyers of the cankers..., -- for them, too, it is the nature of this body to break up, to be laid down.

The *puthujjana*, taking his apparent 'self' at face value, does not see that he is a victim of *upádána*; he does not see that 'being a self' depends upon 'holding a belief in self' (*upádánapaccayá bhavo*); and he does not see that birth and death depend upon his 'being a self' (*bhavapaccayá jāti*, and so on). The *ariyasāvaka*, on the other hand, does see these things, and he sees also their cessation (even though he may not yet have fully realized it); and his seeing of these things is direct. Quite clearly, the idea of *re*-birth is totally irrelevant here.

11. Let us now turn to the beginning of the *paticcasamuppáda* formulation and consider the word *sankhára*. The passage from the Cúlavedallasutta quoted in §5 evidently uses *sankhára* to mean a thing from which some other thing is inseparable -- in other words, *a necessary condition*. This definition is perfectly simple and quite general, and we shall find that it is all that we need. (If a *sankhára* is something upon which something else depends, we can say that the 'something else' is *determined* by the first thing, i.e. by the *sankhára*, which is therefore a 'determination' or a 'determinant'. It will be convenient to use the word *determination* when we need to translate *sankhára*.)

12. Some discussion will be necessary if we are to see that *sankhára*, whenever it occurs, always has this meaning in one form or another. We may start with the fundamental triad:

<i>Sabbe sankhárá aniccá;</i>	All determinations are impermanent;
<i>Sabbe sankhárá dukkhá;</i>	All determinations are unpleasurable (suffering);
<i>Sabbe dhammá anattá.</i>	All things are not-self.

(Dhammapada xx,5-7 <Dh. 277-9>) A *puthujjana* accepts what appears to be his 'self' at face value. When he asks himself 'What is my self?' he seeks to identify it in some way with one thing or another, and specifically with the *pañc'upádánakkhandhá* or one of them (see Khandha Samy. v,5 <S.iii,46> [4]). Whatever thing (*dhamma*) he identifies as 'self', that thing he takes as being permanent; for if he saw it as impermanent he would not identify it as 'self' (see DHAMMA). Since, however, he *does* see it as permanent --

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more permanent, indeed, than anything else -- he will think 'Other things may be impermanent, but not *this* thing, which is *myself*. In order, then, that he *shall* see it as impermanent, indirect methods are necessary: he must first see that *this* thing is dependent upon, or determined by, some *other* thing, and he must then see that this *other* thing, this determination or *sankhāra*, is impermanent. When he sees that the *other* thing, the *sankhāra* on which *this* thing depends, is impermanent, he sees that *this* thing, too, must be impermanent, and he no longer regards it as 'self'. (See SANKHĀRA.) Thus, when *sabbe sankhārá aniccá* is seen, *sabbe dhammá anattá* is seen. And similarly with *sabbe sankhārá dukkhá*. We may therefore understand *sabbe sankhārá aniccá* as 'All things upon which other things (*dhammá*) depend -- i.e. all determinations (*sankhārá*) -- are impermanent' with a tacit corollary 'All things dependent upon other things (*sankhārá*) -- i.e. all determined things (*sankhatá dhammá*) -- are impermanent'. After this, *sabbe dhammá anattá*, 'All things are not-self', follows as a matter of course.[e]

13. Every thing (*dhammá*) must, of necessity, be (or be somehow included within) one or more of the *pañc'upádán)akkhandhá*, either generally -- e.g. feeling in general, feeling as opposed to what is not feeling -- or particularly -- e.g. this present painful feeling as opposed to the previous pleasant feeling (present *as* a past feeling). In the same way, every determination (*sankhārá*) must also be one or more of the *pañc'upádán)akkhandhá*. Thus the *pañc'upádán)akkhandhá* can be regarded either as *sankhārá* or as *dhammá* according as they are seen as 'things-that-other-things-depend-on' or simply as 'things themselves'. See Majjhima iv,5 <M.i,228>.[5]

14. *Sankhārá* are one of the *pañc'upádán)akkhandhá* (or, in the case of the *arahat*, one of the *pañcakkhandhá* -- see Khandha Samy. v,6 <S.iii,47>). The Sutta mentioned in §5 (Khandha Samy. vi,4)[3] says explicitly, in this context, that *sankhārá* are *cetaná*. If this is so, *cetaná* must be something that other things depend on. What are these things? The answer is given at once by the Khajjaniasutta (Khandha Samy. viii,7 <S.iii,87> [6]): they are the *pañc'upádán)akkhandhá* themselves.[f]

15. This leads us to the *puññābhisankhāra*, *apuññābhisankhāra*, and *āneñjābhisankhāra*, of §6. These determinations are clearly *cetaná* of some kind -- indeed the Sutta itself (Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. vi,1) associates the words *abhisankharoti* and *abhisañcayati*. A brief discussion is needed. The Sutta says:

Avijjāgato'yaṃ bhikkhave purisapuggalo puññañ If, monks, this individual man, who is involved in
ce sankhāram abhisankharoti, puññūpagam hoti nescience, is determining a meritorious determination,
viññānam. consciousness has arrived at merit.

The word *puñña* is commonly associated with *kamma*, and the traditional interpretation supposes that *puññūpaga viññāna* is *puññakammavipāka* in the following existence. *Puñña* is certainly *kamma*, but nothing in the Sutta suggests that *puññūpaga viññāna* is anything other than the meritorious consciousness of one who is determining or intending merit. (When merit is intended by an individual he is conscious of his world as 'world-for-doing-merit-in', and consciousness has thus 'arrived at merit'.) In §14 we saw that *cetaná* (or intentions) of all kinds are *sankhārá*, and these are no exception. As we see from the Sutta, however, they are of a particular kind; for they are not found in the *arahat*. They are intentions in which belief in 'self' is implicitly involved. We saw in §10 that belief in 'self' is the condition for birth, and that when all trace of such belief is eradicated the word *birth* no longer applies. Belief in 'self', in exactly the same way, is the condition for consciousness, and when it altogether ceases the word *consciousness* no longer applies. Thus, with cessation of these particular intentions there is cessation of consciousness. The *arahat*, however, still lives, and he has both intentions (or, more generally, determinations) and consciousness; but this consciousness is *niruddha*, and the intentions (or determinations) must similarly be accounted as 'ceased'. (This matter is further discussed in §22. See also VIÑÑĀNA.) *Sankhārapaccayá viññānam*, which means 'so long as there are determinations there is consciousness', is therefore also to be understood as meaning 'so long as there are *puthujjāna*'s determinations there is *puthujjāna*'s consciousness'. Even though the Khajjaniasutta (§14) tells us that determinations are so called since 'they determine the determined' (which includes consciousness), we must not conclude that the determinations in 'determinations are a condition for consciousness' (*sankhārapaccayá viññānam*) are determinations *because* they are a condition for consciousness: on the contrary, they are a condition for consciousness *because* they are determinations. Thus, *vitakkavicārā* determine *vací*, which is why they are called *vacísankhāra*, and it is as a *sankhāra* that

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they are a condition for *viññāna*. In particular, *puññābhisankhāra*, *apuññābhisankhāra*, and *āneñjābhisankhāra*, are *cetanā* that determine *viññāna* as *puññūpaga*, *apuññūpaga*, and *āneñjūpaga*, respectively. They are certain *intentions* determining certain consciousnesses. Since they *determine* something (no matter what), these intentions are *determinations* (as stated in the Khajjaniasutta). As determinations they are a condition for *consciousness*. And as *puthujjanā*'s determinations they are a condition for *puthujjanā*'s consciousness (which is always *puññūpaga*, *apuññūpaga*, or *āneñjūpaga*). Exactly *why* determinations are a condition for consciousness will be discussed later.

16. There is nothing to add to what was said about *kāyasankhāra*, *vacīsañcetana*, and *cittasankhāra*, in §5, except to note that we occasionally encounter in the Suttas the terms *kāyasankhāra*, *vacīsañcetana*, and *manosankhāra* (not *cittasankhāra*). These are to be understood (see Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. iii,5 <S.ii,40>) as *kāyasañcetana*, *vacīsañcetana*, and *manosañcetana*, and should not be confused with the former triad.[g] Other varieties of *sankhāra* met with in the Suttas (e.g. *āyusankhāra*, 'what life depends on', in Majjhima v,3 <M.i,295>), do not raise any particular difficulty. we shall henceforth take it for granted that the essential meaning of *sankhāra* is as defined in §11.

17. Consider now this phrase:

Tisso imā bhikkhave vedanā aniccā sankhata paticcasamuppannā... There are, monks, these three feelings, which are impermanent, determined, dependently arisen...

(Vedanā Samy. i,9 <S.iv,214>). We see in the first place that what is *sankhata* is *anicca*, this we already know from the discussion in §12. In the second place we see that to be *sankhata* and to be *paticcasamuppanna* are the same thing. This at once tells us the purpose of *paticcasamuppada* formulations, namely to show, by the indirect method of §12, that all the items mentioned therein are impermanent, since each depends upon the preceding item. The question may now arise, 'What about the first item -- since there is no item preceding it, is it therefore permanent?'. In several Suttas (Dīgha ii,1 <D.ii,32>; Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. vii,5 <S.ii,104>; *ibid.* vii,7 <S.ii,112-5>) the series runs back to

nāmarūpapaccayā salāyatanam, viññānapaccayā nāmarūpam, and then forward again with *nāmarūpapaccayā viññānam.* with name-&-matter as condition, six bases; with consciousness as condition, name-&-matter; ...with name-&-matter as condition, consciousness.

This is remarked upon by the Buddha (Dīgha ii,1 & Nidāna/Abhisamaya Samy. vii,5) as follows:

Paccudāvattati kho idam viññānam nāmarūpamhā nāparam gacchati; ettavatā jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā yadidam nāmarūpapaccayā viññānam, viññānapaccayā nāmarūpam, nāmarūpapaccayā salāyatanam, This consciousness turns back from name-&-matter, it does not go further; thus far may one be born or age or die or fall or arise; that is to say, with name-&-matter as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, name-&-matter; with name-&-matter as condition, six bases;...

and so on. In this formulation it is clear that there is no 'first item with no item preceding it' -- *nāmarūpa* depends upon *viññāna*, and *viññāna* depends upon *nāmarūpa*, each being determined by the other. If the *puthujjana* decides upon *viññāna* as 'self', he finds its permanence undermined by the impermanence of *nāmarūpa*, and if he decides upon *nāmarūpa* as 'self', its permanence is undermined by the impermanence of *viññāna*. (We may note in passing that the traditional interpretation of *nāmarūpa* as 'mind-&-matter' -- see Visuddhimagga Ch. XVIII -- is quite mistaken. *Rūpa* is certainly 'matter' [or perhaps 'substance'], but *nāma* is *not* 'mind'. Further discussion is out of place here, but see NĀMA. We may, provisionally, translate as 'name-&-matter'.)

18. Since to be *sankhata* and to be *paticcasamuppanna* are one and the same thing, we see that each item in

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the series of §17 is preceded by a *sankhāra* upon which it depends, and that therefore the total collection of items in the series depends upon the total collection of their respective *sankhāra*. In this sense we might say that the total collection of items is *sankhārapaccayā*. But since this statement means only that each and every particular item of the series depends upon a particular *sankhāra*, it does not say anything fresh.

Sankhārapaccayā, however, can be understood in a different way: instead of 'dependent upon a collection of particular *sankhāra*', we can take it as meaning 'dependent upon the fact that there *are* such things as *sankhāra*'. In the first sense *sankhārapaccayā* is the equivalent of *patīccasamuppāna* ('dependently arisen'), and applies to a given series *as a collection of particular items*; in the second sense *sankhārapaccayā* is the equivalent of *patīccasamuppāda* ('dependent arising'), and applies to a given series *as the exemplification of a structural principle*. In the second sense it is true quite generally of *all* formulations of *patīccasamuppāda*, and not merely of *this* formulation (since any other formulation will consist of some other set of particular items). *Patīccasamuppāda* is, in fact, a structural principle (formally stated in the first Sutta passage at the head of this Note), and not one or another specific chain of *sankhāra*. It is thus an over-simplification to regard any one given formulation in particular terms as *patīccasamuppāda*. Every such formulation *exemplifies* the principle: none states it. Any *patīccasamuppāda* series, purely in virtue of its being an exemplification of *patīccasamuppāda*, depends upon the fact that there *are* such things as *sankhāra*, and *a fortiori* the series of §17 depends upon the fact of the existence of *sankhāra*: if there were no such things as *sankhāra* there would be no such thing as *patīccasamuppāda* at all, and therefore no such thing as this individual formulation of it.

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Footnotes:

[d] While maintaining the necessary reservations (see [Preface](#)) about his views, we may observe that Heidegger, in his *Sein und Zeit* (Halle 1927, p. 374), subordinates the ideas of *birth* and *death* to that of *being*, within the unity of our existential structure. I exist, I *am*, as born; and, as born, I *am* as liable at every moment to die. (This book, in English translation [by J. Macquarrie & E. S. Robinson, *Being and Time*, SCM Press, London 1962], has only lately [1965] become available to me: I find that, where they disagree, Heidegger, as against Sartre, is generally in the right.) [[Back to text](#)]

[e] It may seem, upon occasion, that *sankhāra* and *dhamma* coincide. Thus the *pañc'upādānakkhandhā* are what *attavād'upādāna* depends on, and they are therefore *sankhāra*. But also it is with them that *attā* is identified, and they are thus *dhammā*. This situation, however, is telescoped; for in *attavād'upādāna*, which is a complex affair, what is *primarily* (though implicitly) identified as *attā* is *upādāna*, and the *pañc'upādānakkhandhā* are involved only in the second place. See [PARAMATTHA SACCA §§3&4](#). (This, of



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course, is not the only way in which they are *sankhárá*, though §3 might give that impression. The reciprocal dependence of *viññána* and *námarúpa* -- with or without *upádána* -- is another. And see also what follows.) The word *upádána* (lit. 'taking up') has a certain ambiguity about it. As well as 'holding' (seizing, grasping), which is eminently a characteristic of fire no less than of passion (the *upádána* of *pañc'upádánakkhandhá* is *chandarága*, 'desire-&-lust'), the word can also mean the *fuel* of a fire (Majjhima viii,2 <M.i,487>; Avyákata Samy. 9 <S.iv,399-400>). The burning fuel, being held by the 'holding' fire, is itself the fire's 'holding'. The fire is burning, the fuel is burning: two aspects of the same thing. [Back to text]

[f] This Sutta shows that *sankhárá* -- here *cetaná* -- determine not only *rúpa*, *vedaná*, *saññá*, and *viññána*, but also *sankhárá*. *Sankháre sankháráttáya sankhatam abhisankharonti.... Sankhatam abhisankharontí ti kho bhikkhave tasmá Sankhárá ti vuccanti.*[6] The question might arise whether these determinations that are determined by determinations do themselves determine (other) things or not. Are there determinations that do not, in fact, determine anything? The answer is that there cannot be. A determination is essentially *negative* -- '*Omnis determinatio est negatid*' said Spinoza --, and a negative, a negation, only exists as a denial of something positive. The positive thing's *existence* is asserted by the negative in the very act of denying it (just as atheism, which exists as a denial of theism, is evidence that theism exists); and its *essence* (or nature) is defined by the negative in stating what it is *not* (if we know what atheism is we shall know at once what theism is). A *negative* thus determines both the existence and the essence of a *positive*.

In what way is *cetaná* negative? A sheet of paper lying on a table is determined *as a sheet of paper* by its potentialities or possibilities -- i.e. by what it is *for*. It can be used for writing on, for drawing on, for wrapping up something, for wiping up a mess, for covering another sheet, for burning, and so on. But though it *can* be used for these things, it is *not actually* being used for *any* of them. Thus these potentialities *deny* the object lying on the table as it actually is (which is why they are potentialities and not actualities); nevertheless if it were not for the fact that *these particular* potentialities are associated with the object on the table we should not see the object as a 'sheet of paper'. These potentialities, which are *not* the object, determine it for what it is. We know what a thing is when we know what it is for. Thus these potentialities can also be understood as the *significance* or *purpose* of the object, and therefore as its *intention(s)*. (This account is necessarily restricted to the crudely utilitarian level, but will serve to give an indication.) One of these intentions, though of a special kind (present only when there is *avijjá*), is that the object is *for me* -- it is *mine*, *etam mama*. And all these intentions are nothing more nor less than *cetaná*. (See also CETANÁ & ATTÁ.) Determinations generally, whether they are *cetaná* or not, have two essential characteristics: (i) they are bound up with what they determine and (ii) they are *not* what they determine (or not wholly). And, of course, determinations in their turn require other determinations to determine them; which is why *sankhárá* are themselves *sankhatá*. Thus, a sheet of paper is *for* wiping up a mess, which is *for* having my room clean, which is *for* my personal comfort, which is *for* attending to my concerns, which is *for* my future comfort. Cf. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 63 *et seq.* [Back to text]

[g] So far are the expressions *cittasankhára* and *manosankhára* from being interchangeable that their respective definitions actually seem to be mutually exclusive. *Cittasankhára* is *saññá ca vedaná ca*, *manosankhára* is *manosañcetaná*, and the passage from the Saláyatana Samyutta (ix,10) quoted in §5 makes an explicit distinction between *vedaná*, *cetaná*, and *saññá*. But the two expressions are really quite different in kind, and are not to be directly opposed to each other at all. (i) The *citta* of *cittasankhára* is not synonymous with the *mano* of *manosankhára*: *citta*, here, means (conscious) experience generally, whereas *mano* distinguishes *thought* from *word* and *deed*. (ii) The word *sankhára* has a different sense in the two cases: in the first it means 'determination' in a quite general sense (§11); in the second it is a particular *kind* of determination, *viz* intention or volition. (iii) The two compounds are grammatically different: *cittasankhára* is a *dutiya* (accusative) *tappurisa*, *cittam + sankháro*, 'that which determines mind (*citta*)'; *manosankhára* is a *tatiya* (instrumentive) *tappurisa*, *manasá + sankháro*, 'determination (intention or volition) by mind (*mano*)', i.e. mental action (as opposed to verbal and bodily action) -- cf. Majjhima vi,7 <M.i,389>. Clearly enough (ii) and (iii) will apply *mutatis mutandis* to the two senses of the expressions *káyasankhára* and *vacísankhára*. [Back to text]

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19. But though it is an over-simplification to regard any one series as *patīccasamuppāda*, it is not entirely wrong. For we find a certain definite set of items (*viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, *salāyatana*, *phassa*, and so on) recurring, with little variation (Dīgha ii,2 <D.ii,56>,[9] for example, omits *salāyatana*), in almost every formulation of *patīccasamuppāda* in particular terms. The reason for this recurrence is that, though *patīccasamuppāda* is a structural principle, the Buddha's Teaching is concerned with a particular problem, and therefore with a particular application of this principle. The problem is suffering and its cessation; the sphere in which this problem arises is the sphere of experience, of sentient existence or being; and the particular items, *viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, and the rest, are the fundamental categories of this sphere. In consequence of this, the series, *nāmarūpapaccayā viññānam*, *viññānapaccayā nāmarūpam*, *nāmarūpapaccayā salāyatanam*, *salāyatanapaccayā phasso*, and so forth, is the fundamental exemplification of *patīccasamuppāda* in the Buddha's Teaching, and the particular items are the basic *sankhārā*. (See *KAMMA* for a Sutta passage where the *patīccasamuppāda* is exemplified on an entirely different level. Failure to understand that *patīccasamuppāda* is essentially a structural principle with widely different applications leads to confusion.) These particular items, then, being the fundamental categories in terms of which experience is described, are present in all experience; and this basic formulation of *patīccasamuppāda* tells us that they are all dependent, ultimately, upon *viññāna* (this is obviously so, since without consciousness there is no experience).[h] But since all these items, including *viññāna*, are dependent upon *sankhārā*, the series as a whole is *sankhārapaccayā*. (Though this is true in both the senses discussed in §18, the first sense yields us merely a tautology, and it is only the second sense of *sankhārapaccayā* that interests us.) If, therefore, we wish to express this fact, all we have to say is *sankhārapaccayā viññānam*. Since *sankhārapaccayā* (in the sense that interests us) is the equivalent of *patīccasamuppāda*, *sankhārapaccayā viññānam* presumably means 'viññāna is *patīccasamuppāda*'. Let us try to expand this phrase.

20. Any given experience involves *patīccasamuppāda*, but it may do so in a number of different ways at once, each of which cuts across the others. Thus (experience of) the body is inseparable from (experience of) breathing, and (experience of) speaking is inseparable from (experience of) thinking; and both (experience of) breathing and (experience of) thinking are therefore *sankhārā*. But in all experience, as its fundamental categories and basic *sankhārā*, there are *viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, and so on. Thus whenever there is breathing (*kāyasankhāra*), or thinking (*vacīśankhāra*), or, of course, perception and feeling (*cittasankhāra*), there are *viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, and so on, which also are *sankhārā*. Similarly, all experience is *intentional*: it is inseparable (except for the *arahat*) from *puññābhīśankhāra*, *apuññābhīśankhāra*, and *āneñjābhīśankhāra*. But in all experience, once again, there are *viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, and so on, its fundamental categories and basic *sankhārā*. [i] In other words, any exemplification of *patīccasamuppāda* in the sphere of experience can be restated in the form of the *fundamental* exemplification of *patīccasamuppāda* in the sphere of experience, which is, as it must be, that beginning with *viññāna*. Thus *viññāna* and *patīccasamuppāda* are one. This, then, is the meaning of *sankhārapaccayā viññānam*, this is why 'with determinations as condition there is consciousness'.

21. This discussion may perhaps have made it clear why *sankhārā* in the usual twelve-factored *patīccasamuppāda* series can include such a mixed collection of things as intentions of merit, demerit, and imperturbability, in-&-out-breaths, thinking-&-pondering, and perception and feeling. These things, one and all, are things that other things depend on, and as such are *sankhārā* of one kind or another; and so long as there are *sankhārā* of any kind at all there is *viññāna* and everything dependent upon *viññāna*, in other words there is *patīccasamuppāda*. (We may ignore the irrelevant exception of *āyusankhāra* and *saññāvedayitānirodha*, lying outside the sphere of experience. See Majjhima v,3 <M.i,295>.) Conversely, *viññāna* (and therefore *patīccasamuppāda*) ceases to exist when *sankhārā* of all kinds have ceased. (It might be asked why *kāyasankhāra* and the other two are singled out for special mention as *sankhārā*. The answer seems to be that it is in order to show progressive cessation of *sankhārā* in the attainment of *saññāvedayitānirodha* -- see Majjhima v,4 <M.i,301> and Vedanā Samy. ii,1 <S.iv,216> -- or, more simply, to show that so long as there is *patīccasamuppāda* there is body, speech, or [at least] mind.)

22. It should be borne in mind that *patīccasamuppāda anulomam* ('with the grain' -- the *samudaya sacca*) always refers to the *puthujjana*, and *patilomam* ('against the grain' -- the *nirodha sacca*) to the *arahat*. *Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā* is true of the *puthujjana*, and *avijjānirodhā sankhāranirodho* is true of the *arahat*. This might provoke the objection that so long as the *arahat* is living he breathes, thinks-&-ponders, and perceives and feels; and consequently that cessation of *avijjā* does not bring about general cessation of *sankhārā*. It is

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right to say that with a living *arahat* there is still consciousness, name-&-matter, six bases, contact, and feeling, but only in a certain sense. Actually and in truth (*saccato thetato*, which incidentally has nothing to do with *paramattha sacca*, 'truth in the highest [or absolute] sense', a fallacious notion much used in the traditional exegesis -- see PARAMATTHA SACCA) there is, even in this very life, no *arahat* to be found (e.g. *Avyākata Samy. 2* <S.iv,384> -- see PARAMATTHA SACCA §4 [a]); and though there is certainly consciousness and so on, there is no apparent 'self' for whom there is consciousness.

*Yena viññānena Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno
paññāpeyya, tam viññānam Tathāgataṃ pahīnam
ucchinnamūlam tālavatthukatam anabhāvakatam
āyatim anuppādadhammam; viññānasankhāya
vimutto kho mahārāja Tathāgato...*

That consciousness by which the Tathāgata might be manifested has been eliminated by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, dug up, made non-existent, it is incapable of future arising; the Tathāgata, great king, is free from reckoning as consciousness....

(*Avyākata Samy. 1* <S.iv,379>). There is no longer any consciousness pointing (with feeling and the rest) to an existing 'self' and with which that 'self' might be identified. And in the *Kevaddhasutta* (*Dīgha i,11* <D.i,223>), *viññānam anidassanam*, [j] which is the *arahats* 'non-indicative consciousness', is also *viññānassa nirodho*. While the *arahat* yet lives, his consciousness is *niruddha*, or 'ceased', for the reason that it is *ananuruddha-appativiruddha* (*Majjhima ii,1* <M.i,65>). In the same way, when there is no longer any apparent 'self' to be contacted, contact (*phassa*) is said to have ceased:

*Phusanti phassā upadhim paticca
Nirūpadhim kena phuseyyum phassā.*

Contacts contact dependent on ground --
How should contacts contact a groundless one?

(*Udāna ii,4* <Ud.12> This matter has already been touched upon in §§10 & 15. (See also VIÑÑĀNA & PHASSA.)

23. *Sankhārapaccayā viññānam*, as we now see, can be taken to mean that any specific series of *sankhāra-sankhatadhamma* pairs (one or more) of which the first contains *viññāna* is dependent upon the very fact that there are *sankhāra* at all. *Avijjāpaccayā sankhāra* will then mean that the very fact that there are *sankhāra* at all is dependent upon *avijjā*, and with cessation of *avijjā* -- *avijjānirodhā* -- all *sankhāra* whatsoever will cease -- *sankhāranirodho*. This is perhaps most simply stated in the lines from the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*:

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
Tesam hetum Tathāgato āha
Tesañ ca yo nirodho
Evamvādī mahāsmano.*

Of things originating with conditions,
The Tathāgata has told the condition,
And what their cessation is.
The Great Recluse speaks thus.

Here, *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā* are all things whatsoever that depend upon *hetú* ('conditions' -- synonymous with *paccayā*). Since each of these things depends upon its respective *hetu* (as in any *patīccasamuppāda* formulation), it shares the same fate as its *hetu* -- it is present when the *hetu* is present, and absent when the *hetu* is absent. Thus the *hetu* of them taken as a whole (*all things that are hetuppabhavā*) is no different from the *hetu* of their individual *hetú* taken as a whole. When there are *hetú* at all there are *hetuppabhavā dhammā*, when there are no *hetú* there are no *hetuppabhavā dhammā*, and *hetú*, being nothing else than *sankhāra*, have *avijjā* as condition. *Tesam hetum* ('their condition'), therefore, is *avijjā*. To see the Dhamma is to see *patīccasamuppāda* (as noted in §7), and *avijjā* is therefore *non-seeing of patīccasamuppāda*. *Avijjāpaccayā sankhāra* will thus mean '*patīccasamuppāda* depends upon non-seeing of *patīccasamuppāda*'. Conversely, seeing of *patīccasamuppāda* is cessation of *avijjā*, and when *patīccasamuppāda* is seen it loses its condition ('non-seeing of *patīccasamuppāda*') and ceases. And this is cessation of all *hetuppabhavā dhammā*. Thus *tesam yo nirodho* is cessation of *avijjā*.

24. We must now again ask the question of §17: 'What about the first item of the *patīccasamuppāda* formulation -- since there is no item preceding it, is it therefore permanent?'. The first item is now *avijjā*, and

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the Buddha himself answers the question in a Sutta of the Anguttara Nikāya (X,vii,1 <A.v,113>). This answer is to the effect that *avijjā* depends upon not hearing and not practising the Dhamma. It is not, however, the only way of answering the question, as we may see from the Sammāditthisutta (Majjhima i,9 <M.i,54>). Here we find that *avijjā* depends upon *āsava*, and *āsava* depend upon *avijjā*. But one of the *āsava* is, precisely, *avijjāsava*, which seems to indicate that *avijjā* depends upon *avijjā*. [k] Let us see if this is so. We know that *sankhāra* depend upon *avijjā* -- *avijjāpaccayā sankhāra*. But since something that something else depends upon is a *sankhāra*, it is evident that *avijjā* is a *sankhāra*. And, as before, *sankhāra* depend upon *avijjā*. Thus *avijjā* depends upon *avijjā*. Far from being a logical trick, this result reflects a structural feature of the first importance. [l] Before discussing it, however, we must note that this result leads us to expect that any condition upon which *avijjā* depends will itself involve *avijjā* implicitly or explicitly. (In terms of §23 the foregoing argument runs thus. *Avijjāpaccayā sankhāra* may be taken as 'with non-seeing of *patīccasamuppāda* as condition there is *patīccasamuppāda*. But this itself is seen only when *patīccasamuppāda* is seen; for *patīccasamuppāda* cannot be seen as *patīccasamuppāda* before *patīccasamuppāda* is seen. To see *avijjā* or non-seeing, *avijjā* or non-seeing must cease. *Avijjā* therefore comes *first*; for, being its own condition, it can have no anterior term that does not itself involve *avijjā*.)

25. The faculty of *self-observation* or *reflexion* is inherent in the structure of our experience. Some degree of reflexion is almost never entirely absent in our waking life, and in the practice of mindfulness it is deliberately cultivated. To describe it simply, we may say that one part of our experience is immediately concerned with the world as its object, while at the same time another part of our experience is concerned with the immediate experience as its object. This second part we may call *reflexive* experience. (Reflexion is discussed in greater detail in Shorter Notes & FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE.) It will be clear that when there is *avijjā* there is *avijjā* in *both* parts of our experience, the immediate and the reflexive; for though, in reflexion, experience is divided within itself, it is still one single, even if complex, structure. The effect of this may be seen from the Sabbāsavasutta (Majjhima i,2 <M.i,8>) wherein certain wrong views are spoken of. Three of them are:

<i>Attanā va attānam saññānāmi ti;</i>	With self I perceive self;
<i>Attanā va anattānam saññānāmi ti;</i>	With self I perceive not-self;
and <i>Anattanā va attānam saññānāmi ti.</i>	With not-self I perceive self.

A man with *avijjā*, practising reflexion, may identify 'self' with both reflexive and immediate experience, or with reflexive experience alone, or with immediate experience alone. He does *not* conclude that *neither* is 'self', and the reason is clear: it is not possible to get outside *avijjā* by means of reflexion alone; for however much a man may 'step back' from himself to observe himself he cannot help taking *avijjā* with him. There is just as much *avijjā* in the self-observer as there is in the self-observed. (See CETANĀ [b].) And this is the very reason why *avijjā* is so stable in spite of its being *sankhatā*. [m] Simply by reflexion the *puthujjana* can never observe *avijjā* and at the same time *recognize* it as *avijjā*, for in reflexion *avijjā* is the Judge as well as the Accused, and the verdict is always 'Not Guilty'. In order to put an end to *avijjā*, which is a matter of recognizing *avijjā* as *avijjā*, it is necessary to accept on trust from the Buddha a Teaching that contradicts the direct evidence of the *puthujjana*'s reflexion. This is why the Dhamma is *patīsotagāmi* (Majjhima iii,6 <M.i,168>), or 'going against the stream'. The Dhamma gives the *puthujjana* the *outside* view of *avijjā*, which is inherently unobtainable for him by unaided reflexion (in the *ariyasāvaka* this view has, as it were, 'taken' like a graft, and is perpetually available). Thus it will be seen that *avijjā* in reflexive experience (actual or potential) is the condition for *avijjā* in immediate experience. It is possible, also, to take a second step back and reflect upon reflexion; but there is still *avijjā* in this self-observation of self-observation, and we have a third layer of *avijjā* protecting the first two. And there is no reason in theory why we should stop here; but however far we go we shall not get beyond *avijjā*. The hierarchy of *avijjā* can also be seen from the Suttas in the following way.

Katamā pan'āvuso avijjā....
Yam kho āvuso dukkhe aññānam,
dukkhasamudaye aññānam,
dukkhanirodhe aññānam,
dukkhanirodhagāminīpatipadāya aññānam,

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ayam vuccat'ávuso avijjá.

(Majjhima i,9 <M.i,54>)

*Katamañ ca bhikkhave dukkham ariyasaccam...**Katamañ ca bhikkhave dukkhasamudayam ariyasaccam...**Katamañ ca bhikkhave dukkhanirodham ariyasaccam...**Katamañ ca bhikkhave dukkhanirodhagáminípatipadá ariyasaccam.**Ayam eva ariyo atthangiko maggo,
seyyathídam sammáditthi...**Katamá ca bhikkhave sammáditthi...**Yam kho bhikkhave dukkhe ñánam,
dukkhasamudaye ñánam,
dukkhanirodhe ñánam,
dukkhanirodhagáminípatipadáya ñánam,
ayam vuccati bhikkhave sammáditthi.*

(Díggha ii,9 <D.ii,305-12>)

But which, friends, is nescience?...

That which is non-knowledge of suffering,
non-knowledge of arising of suffering,
non-knowledge of ceasing of suffering,
non-knowledge of the way that leads to ceasing of suffering,
this, friends, is called nescience.

And which, monks, is the noble truth of suffering...

And which, monks, is the noble truth of arising of suffering...

And which, monks, is the noble truth of ceasing of suffering...

And which, monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to ceasing of suffering?

Just this noble eight-factored path,
that is to say: right view...

And which, monks, is right view?...

That which is knowledge of suffering,
knowledge of arising of suffering,
knowledge of ceasing of suffering,
knowledge of the way that leads to ceasing of suffering,
this, monks, is called right view.

Avijjá is non-knowledge of the four noble truths. *Sammáditthi* is knowledge of the four noble truths. But *sammáditthi* is part of the four noble truths. Thus *avijjá* is non-knowledge of *sammáditthi*; that is to say, non-knowledge of knowledge of the four noble truths. But since *sammáditthi*, which is knowledge of the four noble truths, is part of the four noble truths, so *avijjá* is non-knowledge of knowledge of knowledge of the four noble truths. And so we can go on indefinitely. But the point to be noted is that each of these successive stages represents an additional layer of (potentially) reflexive *avijjá*. Non-knowledge of knowledge of the four noble truths is non-knowledge of *vijjá*, and non-knowledge of *vijjá* is failure to recognize *avijjá* as *avijjá*. Conversely, it is evident that when *avijjá* is once recognized anywhere in this structure it must vanish everywhere; for knowledge of the four noble truths entails knowledge of knowledge of the four noble truths, and *vijjá* ('science') replaces *avijjá* ('nescience') throughout.[n]

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[Next section](#)[Back to A Note on Paticcasamuppada - Contents](#)[Back to Clearing the Path - Contents](#)[Back to Nānavīra Thera Dhamma Page](#)**Footnotes:**

[h] *Viññāna*, being the *presence* of the phenomenon, of what is present, is negative as regards essence. Other things can be described directly by way of their positive essence as this or that, but not consciousness. Consciousness, however, is necessary before any other thing can be described; for if something is to be described it must first be present in experience (real or imaginary), and its presence is consciousness. Since consciousness can be described only as that upon which other things depend, it is the *existential determination* and nothing else. This will explain also what follows. (Note that the word *existential* is used here in the simple sense of a thing's existence as opposed to its essence, and not in the pregnant sense of *bhava*. See *VINÑĀNA*.) [[Back to text](#)]

[i] See also the heterogeneous series of items (*pariyesanā*, *lābha*, and so on) appearing in the middle of the *paticcasamuppāda* formulation of Dīgha ii,2 <D.ii,58>. [[Back to text](#)]

[j] In the line

*Viññānam anidassanam anantam
sabbatopaham,*

Non-indicative consciousness, limitless, wholly non-originating.

the compound *sabbatopaham* (in Majjhima v,9 <M.i,329>, *sabbatopabham*) is probably *sabbato + apaham* (or *apabham*) from *apahoti*, *a + pahoti* (or *apabhavati* [*apabhoti*]). (Note that in the Majjhima passage preceding this line there is a Burmese *v.l.*, *nāpahosi* for *nāhosi*.) [[Back to text](#)]

[k] Cf. *Avijjā kho bhikkhu eko dhammo yassa
pahānā bhikkhuno avijjā pahiyati vijjā
uppajjati ti.*
Salāyatana Samy. viii,7 <S.iv,50>

Nescience, monk, is the one thing with a monk's elimination of which nescience is eliminated and science arises.

[[Back to text](#)]

[l] On the charge of 'circularity' that common sense may like to bring here, see Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-6. [[Back to text](#)]

[m] The Anguttara Sutta (X,vii,1) referred to in §24 begins thus:

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Purimá bhikkhave koti na paññáyati avijjāya, Ito pubbe avijjā nāhosi, atha pacchá sambhavitī. Evañ ce tam bhikkhave vuccatī, atha ca pana paññáyati, Idapaccayā avijjā ti. Avijjam p'aham bhikkhave sáhāram vadāmi, no anáhāram.

An earliest point of nescience, monks, is not manifest: 'Before this, nescience was not; then afterwards it came into being'. Even if that is said thus, monks, nevertheless it is manifest: 'With this as condition, nescience'. I say, monks, that nescience, too, is with sustenance, not without sustenance.

(In the P.T.S. edition, for *c'etam* read *ce tam* and adjust punctuation.) [Back to text]

[n] Compare also the following:

Rúpā [Saddā... Dhammā] loke piyarúpam satarúpam, etth'esá tanhá uppajjamánā uppajjati ettha nivasamánā nivasati... Rúpatanhá [Saddatanhá... Dhammatanhá] loke piyarúpam satarúpam, etth'esá tanhá uppajjamánā uppajjati ettha nivasamánā nivasati.

Visible forms [Sounds... Images (Ideas)] are dear and agreeable in the world; herein this craving arises, herein it adheres... Craving-for-visible-forms [Craving-for-sounds... Craving-for-images (-ideas)] is dear and agreeable in the world; herein this craving arises, herein it adheres.

And the converse:

...etth'esá tanhá pahiyamánā pahiyati ettha nirujjhamánā nirujjhati.
Dígha ii,9 <D.ii,308-11>

...herein this craving is eliminated, herein it ceases.

Not only is there craving, but there is craving for craving as a condition for craving: indifference to craving destroys it. (*Tanhá*, be it noted, is not the coarse hankering after what we do *not* have [which is *abhijjhá* or covetousness], but the subtle craving for *more* of what we have. In particular, I *am* because I *crave to be*, and with cessation of craving-for-being [*bhavatanhá*, which is itself dependent on *avijjā* and, like it, without first beginning -- Anguttara X,vii,2 <A.v,116>], 'I am' ceases. *Bhavatanhá*, in fact, is the craving for more craving on which craving depends.) [Back to text]

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4. FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE showing 'Invariance under Transformation'

*Tín'imáni bhikkhave sankhatassa
sankhatalakkhanáni. Katamáni tíni. Uppádo
paññáyati, vayo paññáyati, thitassa aññathattam
paññáyati. Imáni kho bhikkhave tíni sankhatassa
sankhatalakkhanáni ti.*
Anguttara III,v,7 <A.i,152>

There are, monks, these three determined-characteristics of what is determined. Which are the three? Arising (appearance) is manifest; disappearance is manifest; change while standing is manifest. These, monks, are the three determined-characteristics of what is determined.

*Tayo'me bhikkhave addhá. Katame tayo. Atíto
addhá, anágato addhá, paccuppanno addhá.
Ime kho bhikkhave tayo addhá ti.*
Itivuttaka III,ii,4 <Iti.53>

There are, monks, these three periods. Which are the three? The past period, the future period, the present period. These, monks, are the three periods.

I. STATIC ASPECT

1. Let o represent a thing.[a]

2. If we wish to represent another thing, not o , we must represent it by another symbol; for we cannot distinguish between o and o except by the fact of their being spatially separated, left and right, on this page; and since this is a representation, not of a structure *in* space (i.e. of a spatial object), but of the structure *of* space (amongst other things), which structure is not itself spatial, such spatial distinctions in the representation must not be taken into account.[b] Thus, whether we write o once or a hundred times still only one thing is represented.

3. Let us, then, represent a thing other than o by x . (We are concerned to represent only the *framework* within which things exist, that is to say the *possibility* of the existence of things; consequently it does not matter whether there *are* in fact things -- it is enough that there *could* be. But the actual existence of things is indispensable evidence that they *can* exist; and when there actually is a given thing o , there actually are, also, *other* things.)[c] We now have *two* things, o and x .

4. We are, however, still unable to distinguish them; for, since spatial distinctions are to be disregarded, we cannot tell which is the original thing, o or x . Experience shows us that when we are conscious of one thing we are not also equally conscious of another thing; or, better, it can *always* be observed (by reflexion) that two (different) experiences are not both the centre of consciousness at the same time. The difference between two things is, ultimately, their order of priority -- one is 'this' and the other is 'that' --, and this difference we represent by a difference in shape; for if two things are identical in all qualitative respects, have



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all their properties in common (including position if they are tactile things -- and it must be remembered that the eye, since it is muscular, is also an organ of touch, giving perceptions of space and shape as well as of colour and light), [d] no priority is evident, and there are not *two* things, but only one; and thus difference in priority can be represented by difference of qualitative property. But difference in shape alone only tells us that if one of them is 'this' the other is 'that' -- it does not tell us *which* is 'this'. [e]

5. We have, then, to distinguish between *first* and *second*, or *one* and *two*. At first sight this seems easy -- *one* is obviously o and *two* is $o\ x$. But since it makes no difference *where* we write these symbols (spatial distinctions being of no account), we cannot be sure that they will not group themselves $o\ o$ and x . Since o and o are only one thing, namely o , we are back where we started.

6. To say that o and o are only one thing is to say that there is *no* difference between them; and to say that o and x are two things is to say that there *is* a difference between them (no matter which precedes). In other words, *two* things define a thing, namely the difference between them. And the difference between them, clearly, is what has to be done to pass from one to the other, or the *operation of transforming* one into the other (that is, of interchanging them). A little thought will show that this operation is *invariant* during the transformation (a 'journey from A to B' -- to give a rough illustration -- remains unchanged as a 'journey from A to B' at all stages of the journey), and also that the operation is a thing of a higher or more general order than either of the two things that define it (a 'journey from A to B' is more general than either 'being in A' or 'being in B' since it embraces both: a 'journey from A to B' may be *defined* as the operation of transforming 'being in A' into 'being in B' and 'not being in B' into 'not being in A'). Each of these two things, furthermore, is itself an operation of the same nature, but of a *lower* or more particular order (a 'journey from one part of A [or B] to another' is 'being in A [or B]', just as a 'journey from A to B' is 'being in Z', where A and B are adjacent towns and Z is the province containing them). But we must get back to our noughts and crosses.

7. Since $o\ o$ is *one*, and $o\ x$ is *two* (though the order of precedence between o and x is not determined), it is evident that we can use these two pairs to distinguish between *first* and *second*. In *whatever* way the four symbols, o , o , o , and x , may pair off, the result is the same (and it makes no difference whether $o\ o$ is regarded as one thing and $o\ x$ as two things, or, as in the last paragraph, $o\ o$ is regarded as no operation and $o\ x$ as one operation -- *nought* precedes *one* as *one* precedes *two*). We have only to write down these four symbols (in any pattern we please) to represent 'two things, o and x , o preceding x '.

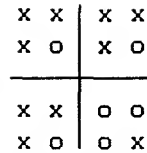
8. As these four symbols pair off, we get two distinguishable things, $o\ o$ and $o\ x$ (which are 'o first' and 'x second'). These two things themselves define an operation -- that of transforming $o\ o$ into $o\ x$ and $o\ x$ into $o\ o$. This operation is itself a thing, which we may write, purely for the sake of convenience, thus: $\begin{matrix} o & o \\ o & x \end{matrix}$.

9. It will readily be seen that if $\begin{matrix} o & o \\ o & x \end{matrix}$ is a thing, then another thing, not $\begin{matrix} o & o \\ o & x \end{matrix}$, will be represented by $\begin{matrix} x & x \\ x & o \end{matrix}$; for if we take $\begin{matrix} o & o \\ o & x \end{matrix}$ as 'o precedes x', then we must take $\begin{matrix} x & x \\ x & o \end{matrix}$ as 'x precedes o'. But we do not know which comes first, $\begin{matrix} o & o \\ o & x \end{matrix}$ or $\begin{matrix} x & x \\ x & o \end{matrix}$. By repetition of the earlier discussion, we see that we must take three of one and one of the other to indicate precedence; and in this way we arrive at a fresh thing (of greater complexity)

represented by $\begin{matrix} o & o & | & o & o \\ o & x & | & o & x \\ \hline o & o & | & x & x \\ o & x & | & x & o \end{matrix}$. Here it is clear that though in the fourth quarter, $\begin{matrix} x & x \\ x & o \end{matrix}$, x precedes o, yet the first quarter, $\begin{matrix} o & o \\ o & x \end{matrix}$, precedes the fourth quarter. So in the whole we must say 'o precedes x *first*, and then x precedes o'.

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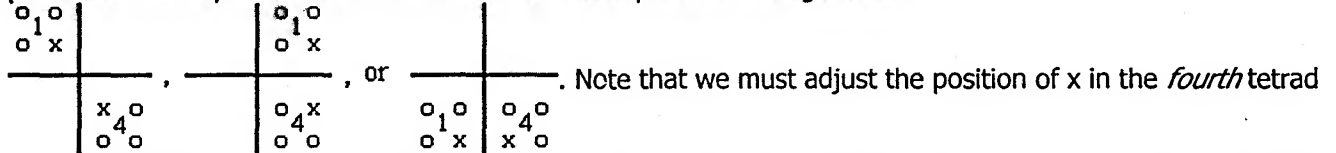
10. Obviously we can represent the negative of this fresh thing by



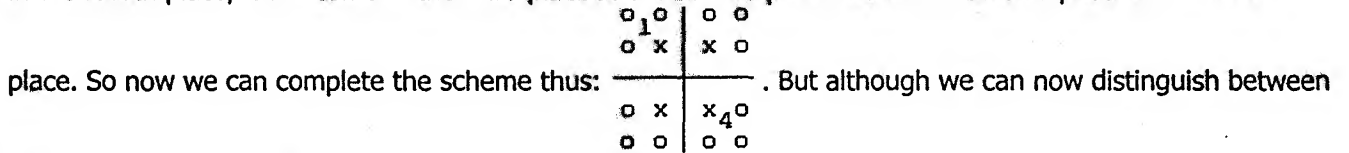
, and repeat the whole

procedure to arrive at a thing of still greater complexity; and there is no limit to the number of times that we can do this.

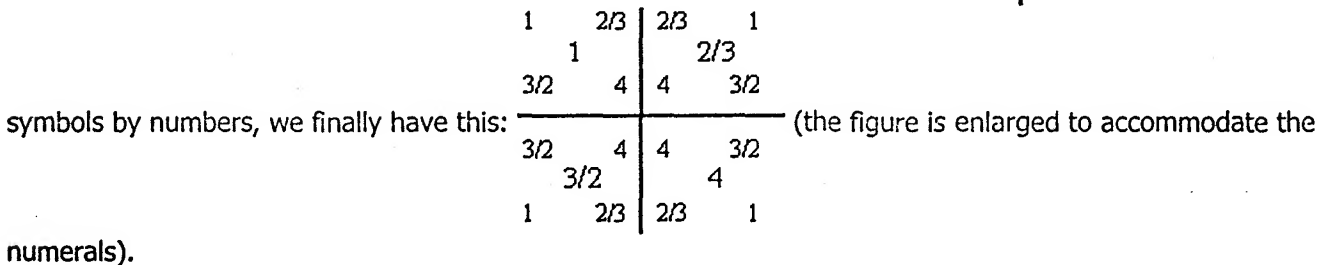
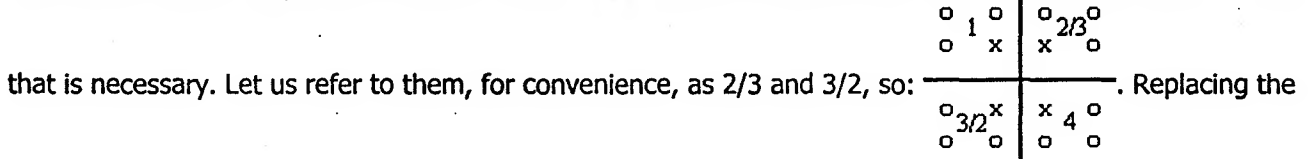
11. In §7 we said that in whatever way the four symbols, o, o, o, and x, may pair off, the result is the same. In how many ways can they pair off? To find out we must number them. But a difficulty arises. So long as we had the four symbols written down *anywhere*, the objection that we were using spatial distinctions to distinguish one o from another did not arise (and in §8 we noted that we chose to write them $\begin{array}{c} o \\ o \end{array} \begin{array}{c} o \\ x \end{array}$ purely for convenience' sake). Once we number them (1, 2, 3, 4), however, the objection becomes valid; for the only distinction between o_1 and o_2 and o_3 -- apart from the numbers attached to them -- is their relative spatial positioning on this page. But at least we know this, that $\begin{array}{c} o \\ o \end{array} \begin{array}{c} o \\ x \end{array}$ represents 'o precedes x'; and so it follows that, even if we cannot distinguish between the first three, x comes fourth. In any way, then, in which we *happen* to write down these four symbols, *x marks the fourth place*. (If, for example, we had written them $o x o o$, the symbol x would still mark the fourth place.) And if x comes in the fourth place in the first place, it will come in the first place in the fourth place. This means that we can choose the first place at our convenience (only the fourth place being already fixed) and mark it with 'x in the fourth place', i.e. $\begin{array}{c} o \\ o \end{array} \begin{array}{c} o \\ x \end{array}$. With the fourth place determined, we are left with a choice of three possible arrangements:



Note that we must adjust the position of x in the *fourth* tetrad to come in whichever place we choose as the *first*. Let us (again purely for convenience' sake) choose the first of these three possibilities. It is clear that if x comes in the fourth place in the first place and in the first place in the fourth place, it will come in the third place in the second place and in the second place in the third



the second place and the third place, we cannot tell which of the two, $\begin{array}{c} o \\ x \end{array} \begin{array}{c} o \\ o \end{array}$ or $\begin{array}{c} o \\ o \end{array} \begin{array}{c} x \\ o \end{array}$, is the second and which the third: all we can say is that if one of them is the second the other is the third. This, as we shall see, is all



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12. In this way the four symbols, o, o, o, and x, when written $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$, can be numbered $\begin{matrix} 1 & | & 2/3 \\ \hline 3/2 & | & 4 \end{matrix}$; and we see that pairing off can be done in three ways: [1 - 2/3] [3/2 - 4], [1 - 3/2] [2/3 - 4], and $\begin{matrix} 1 & - & 4 \\ \hline 2/3 & - & 3/2 \end{matrix}$. These may be understood as the operations, respectively, (i) of interchanging column $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ \hline 3/2 \end{matrix}$ with column $\begin{matrix} 2/3 \\ \hline 4 \end{matrix}$, (ii) of interchanging row $\begin{matrix} 1 & 2/3 \end{matrix}$ with row $\begin{matrix} 3/2 & 4 \end{matrix}$, and (iii) of doing both (i) and (ii) in *either* order and therefore both together (this really means that the three operations are mutually independent, do not obstruct one another, and can all proceed at once). [f] And these, when set out in full -- first the original arrangement $\begin{matrix} 1 & | & 2/3 \\ \hline 3/2 & | & 4 \end{matrix}$ (which may be taken as the zero operation of no interchange), and then the results

of the other three operations, $\begin{matrix} 2/3 & | & 1 & 3/2 & | & 4 \\ \hline 4 & | & 3/2 & 1 & | & 2/3 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 4 & | & 3/2 \\ \hline 2/3 & | & 1 \end{matrix}$ --, make up the figure at the end of the last paragraph. It is easily seen that no question of priority between 2/3 and 3/2 arises.

13. We have found that a thing can be represented, in increasing complexity of structure, as follows: $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$,

$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & | & \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x & | & \circ & x \\ \hline \circ & \circ & | & x & x \\ \circ & x & | & x & \circ \end{matrix}$

, and so on, indefinitely. The first of these, o, clearly does not allow of further discussion; but the

second, $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & | & \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x & | & \circ & x \\ \hline \circ & \circ & | & x & x \\ \circ & x & | & x & \circ \end{matrix}$

, as will be seen from what has gone before, can be regarded as a combination, or

rather *superposition*, of four operations: no interchange, interchange of columns $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & - & \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x & - & x & \circ \end{matrix}$, interchange of rows $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & - & \circ & x \\ \circ & x & - & \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$, and interchange of columns and rows together $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & - & x & \circ \\ \circ & x & - & \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$; the whole being represented

so: $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & | & \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x & | & x & \circ \\ \hline \circ & \circ & | & \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$

. A thing represented by $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$, that is to say, consists of four members, one of which

corresponds to each of the four operations. As we go to greater complexity and consider a thing represented

by $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ & | & \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x & | & \circ & x \\ \hline \circ & \circ & | & x & x \\ \circ & x & | & x & \circ \end{matrix}$

, we find that the following operations are superposed: no interchange; interchange of column

1 with column 2 and of column 3 with column 4; similar interchange of rows; interchange of column 1-&2 with column 3-&4; similar interchange of rows; and any or all of these together. The total is sixteen; and the whole representation is given below (the numbers are not necessary but are given for clarity's sake, with 2/3 just as 2 and 3/2 as 3 and corresponding simplifications in the other numbers).

$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$
$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ x & x \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$

(25)

o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o
o x	o x	x o	x o	o x	o x	x o	x o
— 1 —		— 2 —		— 5 —		— 6 —	
o o	x x	o o	x x	x x	o o	x x	o o
o x	x o	x o	o x	x o	o x	o x	x o
— 3 —		— 4 —		— 7 —		— 8 —	
o x	o x	x o	x o	o x	o x	x o	x o
o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o
o x	x o	x o	o x	x o	o x	o x	x o
o o	x x	o o	x x	x x	o o	x x	o o
— 9 —		— 10 —		— 13 —		— 14 —	
o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o
o x	o x	x o	x o	o x	o x	x o	x o
— 11 —		— 12 —		— 15 —		— 16 —	
o x	x o	x o	o x	x o	o x	o x	x o
o o	x x	o o	x x	x x	o o	x x	o o
o x	o x	x o	x o	o x	o x	x o	x o
o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o	o o

Here we have sixteen members, one corresponding to each operation (as before). If we go to still more complex representations of a thing (as indicated in §10) we shall get 64 members, and then 256 members, and so on, indefinitely. Note that any of these representations can -- more strictly, though less conveniently -- be written in one line, in which case there are no columns-and-rows; and we are then concerned throughout only with interchanges of symbols -- singly and in pairs, in pairs of pairs and in pairs of pairs of pairs, and so on. (This, incidentally, throws light on the structure of a line; for we are taking advantage of the structure of a line to represent structure in general. The structure of the line -- or, more exactly, of *length* -- is seen when we superpose all the members of the representation.)

14. It is a characteristic of all these representations that the operation of transforming any given member into any other member of the set transforms *every* member of the set into another member of the same set. The whole, then, is *invariant under transformation*. Attention, in other words, can shift from one aspect of a thing to another while the thing as a whole remains *absolutely* unchanged. (This universal property of a thing is so much taken for granted that a structural reason for it -- or rather, the possibility of representing it symbolically -- is rarely suspected.) See CETANÁ (Husserl's cube).

15. Representations of a thing in greater complexity than the 4-member figure show the structure of successive *orders of reflexion* (or, more strictly, of *pre-reflexion* -- see DHAMMA [b]). Thus, with 16 members we represent the fundamental structure of the fundamental structure of a thing, in other words the structure of first-order reflexion; whereas with four members we have simply first-order reflexion or the structure of the immediate thing. (In first-order reflexion, the immediate thing is merely an *example* of a

thing: it is, as it were, 'in brackets'. In second-order reflexion -- the 16-member figure --, first-order reflexion is 'in brackets' as an *example* of fundamental structure.) In the 16-member representation, *any* two of the other 15 members of the set together with a given member uniquely define a tetrad with the structure of the 4-member representation; and *any* such tetrad uniquely defines three other tetrads such that the four tetrads together form a tetrad of tetrads, and this again with the same structure. From this it can be seen that the structure of the structure of a thing is the same as the structure of a thing, or more generally that the structure of structure has the structure of structure.[g] The 16-member representation gives the fundamental structure of first-order reflexion, just as 4 members represent the fundamental structure of immediacy, and the single member (o) represents simply immediacy, the thing.

16. The same structure, naturally, is repeated at each level of generality, as will be evident from the numbers in the figure at the end of §11. The whole (either at the immediate or at any reflexive level) forms a hierarchy infinite in both directions[h] (thus disposing, incidentally, of the current assumptions of *absolute smallness* -- the electron -- in quantum physics, and *absolute largeness* -- the universe -- in astronomical physics).[i] It will also be evident that successive *orders* of reflexion generate a hierarchy that is infinite, though in one direction only (perpendicular, as it were, to the doubly infinite particular-and-general hierarchy).

17. The foregoing discussion attempts to indicate in the barest possible outline the nature of fundamental structure in its static aspect. Discussion of the dynamic aspect must deal with the structure of *duration*, and will go on to distinguish *past*, *present*, and *future*, at any time, as over-determined, determined, and under-determined, respectively. The way will then be open for discussion of *intention*, *action*, and *choice*, and the teleological nature of experience generally.

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Footnotes:

[a] An *existing* thing is an experience (in German: *Erlebnis*), either present or (in some degree) absent (i.e. either immediately or more or less remotely present). See [NĀMA & RŪPA](#). [[Back to text](#)]

[b] See [RŪPA \[e\]](#), where it is shown that space is a secondary, not a primary, quality. [[Back to text](#)]

[c] All this, of course, is tautologous; for 'to be a thing' means 'to be able to be or exist', and there is no *thing* that *cannot* exist. And if anything exists, everything else does (see (a) above). Compare this utterance of Parmenides: 'It needs must be that what can be thought of and spoken of is; for it is possible for it to be, and it is not possible for what is no thing to be'. (Parmenides seems to have drawn excessive conclusions from this principle through ignoring the fact that a thought is an imaginary, and therefore *absent*, experience -- or rather, a complex of absent experiences --; but the principle itself is sound. The images involved in thinking must, individually at least [though not necessarily in association], already in some sense be *given* -- i.e. as what is *elsewhere*, or *at some other time*, or both -- at the immediate level, before they can be thought. Perhaps the method of this Note will suggest a reconciliation between the Parmenidean absolute denial of the existence of no thing, with its corollary, the absolute existence of whatever does exist, and the merely *relative* existence of every thing as implied by the undeniable fact of change.) [[Back to text](#)]

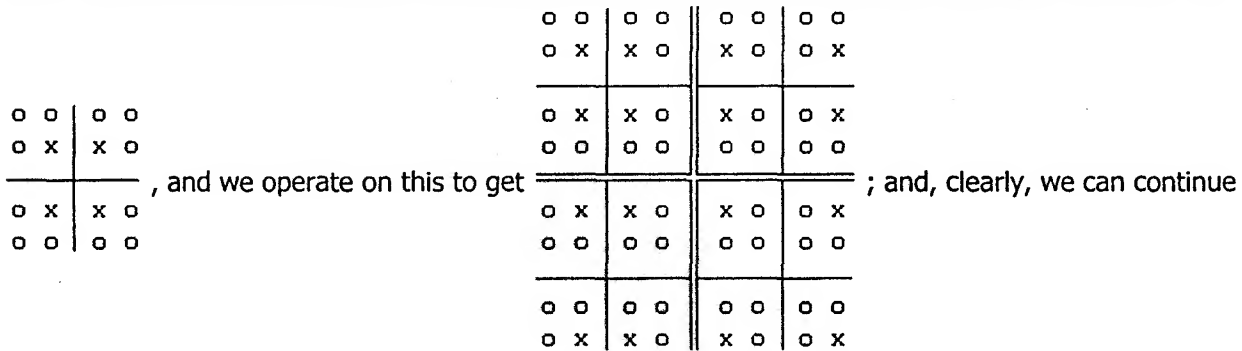
[d] Strictly, we should not go *from* muscles *to* spatial perceptions. Spatial perceptions come first; then we observe that whenever there are spatial perceptions a muscular organ can be found; finally we conclude that a muscular organ is *very probably* a condition for spatial perceptions. See [PHASSA & RŪPA](#). [[Back to text](#)]

[e] McTaggart, *I discover*, (*op. cit.* §45) bases his version of fundamental structure on a twofold direct appeal to experience: first, that something exists, and secondly, that more than one thing exists. But this is not enough: it is essential also to see that, of two things, in so far as they are *two*, one is 'this' and one is 'that'. [[Back to text](#)]

[f] If we describe the three operations as 'horizontal interchange', 'vertical interchange', and 'diagonal interchange', it will readily be seen that *anyone* of the three is equivalent to the other two done together. And since each is *both* the other two, it is *not either* of them. [[Back to text](#)]

[g] There is an old axiom: *Quidquid cognoscitur, per modum cognoscentis cognoscitur*-- Whatever is known, is known in the mode of the knower. This would imply that, if the mode (or structure) of immediate experience were different from that of reflexive experience, it would be systematically falsified in the very act of being known. A further act of reflexion would then be necessary to reveal the falsification. And this, in turn, would involve a further falsification, requiring yet a further act of reflexion. And so on indefinitely, with no end to the falsification; and fundamental structure (if any) would never be knowable. But we now see that the modes of immediate and of reflexive experience are the same, and consequently that any further act of reflexion can only confirm the original reflexive evidence, which is therefore apodictic. Fundamental structure guarantees reflexive knowledge of it. [Back to text]

[h] The structure of the immediate hierarchy, based on $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & x \end{matrix}$, comes into view when the operations of interchange of §12 are themselves subjected to these operations. The original operations are given by



indefinitely. Similarly for the hierarchies of each level of reflexive experience. [Back to text]

[i] It is evident, in practice, that limits are encountered. There is, for example, a limit to the degree of smallness that can be distinguished. The reason for this is to be looked for on the volitional level. In order for a thing to be distinguished (or isolated) it must be observable *at leisure*, and this is a voluntary reflexive capacity. Beyond a certain degree of smallness this capacity fails. The smallest thing that can be distinguished has a certain appreciable size, but the visual (tactile) oscillations can no longer be controlled reflexively so that one part may be distinguishable from another part. And conversely, above a certain degree of largeness it is not possible to pass from one part to another at will, so as to appreciate the whole. Similar considerations will apply to perceptions other than size. The range of voluntary reflexion is not dictated by fundamental structure and varies (we may presume) from individual to individual, and particularly from individuals of one species to those of another. The ranges of an elephant and of an ant, at least as regards spatial perceptions, will scarcely overlap at all.

The existence of such limits can easily be demonstrated by an artificial device. If a cinematograph film is projected slowly enough, we perceive a series of stills, each of which we can examine individually. When the projection is speeded up, this examination becomes more difficult, and the series of stills is seen as a flicker. Then, at a certain point, the flickering ceases and we see simply a single (moving) picture. If, on the other hand, the projection is slowed down instead of speeded up, there comes a point past which the individual stills are no longer grasped as forming part of a series, and the unity of the film as a whole is lost. [Back to text]



The Third Buddhist Convocation: Historical Fact or Pious Fabrication ?

Y. Karunadasa

In spite of minor discrepancies there is a substantial core of evidence for the historicity of the First and the Second Buddhist Convocations. They are mentioned both in the canonical and exegetical works of the Theravadins and also in the historical records of the Northern Buddhist tradition. But when we come to the Third Buddhist Convocation we are confronted with a different situation. It is recognized only by the Theravadins and all references to it are confined to the chronicles and commentaries compiled in Sri Lanka. There is no allusion to it in any of the edicts of Emperor Asoka although the tradition claims that it was held under his royal patronage. In view of these reasons critical scholarship tends to dismiss the Third Buddhist Convocation as a pious fabrication on the part of the Buddhist historical tradition of Sri Lanka in order to establish the authenticity of the school of Buddhism that was introduced to the Island in the third century B.C. The present paper is intended as a critical response to this long-standing view. It seeks to reinterpret the traditional account of the Third Buddhist Convocation in the light of parallel data from the sources of Northern Buddhism and to present an argument for its being recognized as a historical event.

The earliest reference to the Third Buddhist Convocation is found in the *Dīpavaṃsa*.¹ But it is in the *Mahāvāṃsa* and in the commentaries to the *Vinaya*² and the *Kathāvatthu*³ that we get a detailed account of the event. The account begins with a continuous narration of a series of episodes which culminated in the convocation. It includes a description of the life of the venerable *thera* who presided at the convocation, the conversion of Emperor Asoka to Buddhism, his many acts of beneficence and lavish gifts to the *Samgha*, the entry into the *Sāsana* of heretics who declared their own doctrines as the word of the Buddha, the postponement of the *Upasatha* ceremony for six continuous years because of the heretics within the *Samgha*, the Emperor's abortive attempt at reconciliation through his minister Mahadeva, the remorse felt by the Emperor over this act, his meeting with the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera who declares that the Emperor has

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no moral responsibility over this act, and the *Thera's* instruction to the Emperor on the teaching of the Buddha for seven consecutive days at the Royal Park:

“ On the seventh day King Asoka had the community of monks assembled at Asokārāma. He got an enclosure of screens and took his seat within this enclosure. Getting the monks to group themselves according to the divergent views they professed, the King summoned each group of monks in turn and asked this question: ‘What was the Perfectly Enlightened One a Teacher of’ (*Kimvādī Sammā Sambuddho*). Those who believed in eternalism replied that the Buddha was a teacher of eternalism. Those who believed in qualified eternalism replied that the Buddha was a teacher of qualified eternalism. Likewise those who believed in the theories of finiteness and infinitude, the eel-wrigglers, casuists, those who professed *Nibbana* of this life also replied according to the views they held. It was not difficult for the king who had already learnt the Dhamma to realize that they were not Buddhist monks but heretics who belonged to other persuasions. The king gave them white garments and expelled all of them, numbering 60,000 in all, from the community of monks. Next the king summoned the remaining monks and asked the same question: ‘What was the Perfectly Enlightened One a teacher of’. They said in reply, ‘Great king, He was *Vibhajjavādī*’. On being replied so and wishing to get this confirmed the King asked the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera, ‘Venerable Sir, was the Perfectly Enlightened one *Vibhajjavādī*?’ ‘Yes, Great King’, replied the *Thera*. Thereupon King Asoka told the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera, ‘Venerable Sir, the *Sāsana* is now pure, let the fraternity of monks perform the *Uposatha*’. At this assembly, numbering 60,000 monks, the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera recited the treatise called *Kathāvatthu* in order to refute the heretical views. Even as the Elders, Kassapa the Senior and Yasa the son of Kakanda, rehearsed the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, he, too, selected one thousand monks from those numbering 60,000, who were well versed in the learning of the Three-fold Knowledge and rehearsed the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. Thus rehearsing the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, he purified the Dispensation of all stains and held the Third Convocation.”⁴

It will be seen that the most important, in fact the very pivotal, word in this account is *vibhajjavādī* which we have left untranslated. If the account is historically authentic, then it is this particular word, more than any other, that should give us a clue to the circumstances that led to the Third Buddhist Convocation. It is strange, however, that a word of such significance should have been left unexplained in the works where this account occurs. This situation is perhaps responsible for there being more than one explanation in the subsequent exegesis on why the Buddha came to be represented as *Vibhajjavādī*.

Vamsatthappakāsinī, which is the sub-commentary to the *Mahāvamsa*, explains *vibhajjavādī* as: *Khandhānam vibhajjakattā vibhajjavādī*.⁵ It is not clear whether this refers to the early Buddhist analysis of the individual being into five aggregates known as *khandhas* or whether it refers to the Abhidhamma analysis of the *khandhas* into their ultimate constituents known as *dhammas*. In whichever way we interpret it it is on the importance of analysis that the emphasis is laid and it is in the sense of 'one who resorts to analysis' that the term *vibhajjavādī* is understood here.

It must be admitted that analysis plays an important role in the Buddhist teachings both of the Suttas and of the Abhidhamma. It is in fact closely connected with the non-substantialist view of existence which Buddhism advocates. But it must also be admitted that no less important role is played by synthesis as well. If the *khandā*, *āyatana*, *dhātu*, and *dhamma* divisions represent the analytical aspect of Buddhism, the Buddhist doctrines of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and conditionality (*paccayākāranaya*) bring into focus the importance it attaches to synthesis. Hence analysis and synthesis, what the Abhidhamma calls *bheda* and *saṅgha*, are two complementary methods, the one without the other giving only a partial picture of the world of experience. Accordingly to represent Buddhism as a doctrine of analysis is to overlook the importance attached to synthesis in the Buddhist methodology.

The *Sāratthadīpanī*, a sub-commentary to the *Vinaya*, observes that the Buddha is called *Vibhajjavādī* because it is through *vibhajjavāda* or qualified explanations that he avoids erroneous extremes such as eternalism and

annihilationism.⁶ The *Vimativinodanī*, another sub-commentary to the *Vinaya*, goes a step further and observes that if the Buddha is called *Vibbhajjavādī* it is because he always resorts to analytical or qualified explanations (*ekanta-Vibbhajjavādī-sīla*).⁷

In this explanation the two sub-commentaries seem to have overlooked one important fact. This refers to the circumstance that as mentioned in the canonical texts it is not only qualified statements (*vibbhajjavāda*) that the Buddha makes. Sometimes the Buddha makes what is called *ekamsavāda* or categorical statements as well.⁸ Therefore the question that arises here is why '*Vibbhajjavādī*' is preferred to '*Ekamsavādī*' as a proper term to represent the Buddha. This problem will become further clarified if we examine here the well-known Buddhist classification of questions into four groups, which is as follows:

1. *Pañho ekamsavyākaranīyo*, a question which should be answered categorically, either in the affirmative or in the negative.
2. *Pañho vibhajjavākyākaranīyo*, a question which should be answered analytically, in other words, a question to which a qualified answer should be given.
3. *Pañho paṭipucchāvākyākaranīyo*, a question which should be answered by raising a counter question, the need for the counter question being due to the ambiguities in the original question.
4. *Pañho ṭhapanīyo*, a question which should be set aside, most probably because it is meaningless and therefore by its very nature not answerable.⁹

It will be noted that corresponding to the four kinds of question there are four kinds of answer as well. It will also be noted that no indication is made here to the effect that one kind of answer is either superior or inferior to any other kind of answer. The sequence of their enumeration does not imply a theory as to their degrees of validity. Each kind of answer, when apposite, is equally valid and equally commendable. What determines the validity of the answer is whether it belongs to the same class to which the question belongs. Hence the Buddha says that a person who does not answer categorically a question which ought to be answered categorically, who does not answer analytically a question which ought to be answered analytically,

who does not answer with a counter question a question which ought to be answered by raising a counter question, and who does not set aside a question which ought to be set aside - such a person is indeed not fit to discuss with (*akaccho*).¹⁰

In consonance with this situation we find in the Pali *suttas* statements which could be cited as examples for all the four modes of explanation. A typical example of an *ekamsavāda* or categorical statements would be the well known formula: *Sabbe saṃkhārā aniccā* (all phenomena are impermanent). Although this is not given as an example for clarifying the *ekamsavāda* mode of explanation we could cite it as a categorical answer in the affirmative to a question such as: Are all *saṃkhāras* impermanent? Before we come to the second mode of explanation let us take the third and fourth first. A good example for the third is found in the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta of the *Dīghanikāya*. When Poṭṭhapāda the wandering ascetic asks the Buddha: Is consciousness one thing and soul another? the Buddha answers it by raising a counter question in order to get clarified what the interlocuter takes to be the soul.¹¹ An example for the fourth where the question should be set aside is found in the ten undetermined (*avyākata*) questions. These relate to whether the world is finite or not in terms of time and space, whether the life principle and the physical body are identical or not, and whether *Tathāgata*, the one who has attained emancipation, exists after death, or does not exist, or both exists and does not exist, or neither exists nor non-exists.¹²

Now let us take *vibhajjavyākaranīya*, the second mode of explanation which we proposed to consider last. This, as noted above, refers to questions to which analytical or qualified answers should be given. We find in the canonical texts two specific instances where the Buddha is said to follow the *vibhajjavāda* or the analytical/qualified mode of explanation. The first is found in the Subha Sutta of the *Majjhimanikāya* where a young Brahmin called Subha asks the Buddha for his opinion on the proposition that it is a householder and not a recluse who would succeed in obtaining what is right, just and good. The Buddha says in reply:

*Vibhajjavādo kho aham ettha mānava, nāham ettha ekamsavādo.
Gihissa vāhaṃ manava pabbjitassa vā micchāpaṭipattim na vaṇṇemi.
Gihi vā hi mānava pabbajito vā micchāpaṭipanno
micchāpaṭipannādhikaraṇahetu na ārādhako hoti nayaṃ dhammaṃ
kusalaṃ. Gihissa vāhaṃ mānava pabbajitassaṃ vā sammāpaṭipattim*

*vaṇṇemi. Gihi vā hi mānava pabbajito vā sammāpaṭipanno sammāpaṭipannādhikaraṇahetu ārādhako hoti nayaṃ dhammaṃ kusalam.*¹³

English translation:

Here (*ettha*), O young man, I give an analytical explanation; I do not make here (*ettha*) a categorical assertion. O young man, I do not praise a wrong course in either a householder or one who has gone forth. If, O young man, either a householder or one who has gone forth is faring along wrongly, then as a result and consequence of his wrong course he is not accomplishing what is right, just and good. But I, O young man, praise a right course both for a householder and for one who has gone forth. If, O young man, either a householder or one who has gone forth is faring along rightly, then as a result and consequence of his right course he is accomplishing what is right, just and good.

What we must not overlook in the answer given by the Buddha is the use of the adverbial form *ettha*. It means 'here', 'herein', 'in this respect' or, to be more precise, 'in relation to the question raised by Subha'. Its importance lies in the fact that it clearly indicates the specific context in which the Buddha gives his answer following the *vibhajjavāda* method. If we were to overlook the context-indicating term *ettha*, as is often done,¹⁴ it would give the wrong impression that the Buddha always follows *vibhajjavāda* in preference to *ekamsavāda*, that he endorses only analytical statements and not universal propositions. But the use of the term '*ettha*' prevents us from drawing such a conclusion.

The other instance of the Buddha following the *vibhajjavāda* mode of explanation is recorded in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*:

*Gārayhaṃ kho bhante Bhagavā garahati paṣamsiyam paṣamsati. Gārayhaṃ kho bhante Bhagavā garahanto paṣamsiyam paṣamsanto vibhajjavādo Bhagavā. Na so Bhagava ettha ekamsavādo.*¹⁵

English translation:

Sir, the Blessed One blames what is blamable and praises what is praise-worthy. Sir, by blaming what is blamable and praising what is

praise-worthy, the Blessed One speaks after analysing. Here the Blessed One does not speak categorically.

In this question, too, the use of the term *ettha* is intended to show that if the Buddha does not make a categorical assertion on this issue it is because the context does not warrant it. Again the clear implication is that the Buddha does not endorse only the *vibhajjavāda* mode of explanation.

It is in consonance with this situation that when Poṭṭhapāda, the wandering ascetic, tells the Buddha, “We do not know of any categorical doctrines preached by the Buddha”, the Buddha in reply says: “I have taught and laid down doctrines of which it is possible to make categorical assertions and I have taught and laid down doctrines of which it is not possible to make categorical assertions”.¹⁶

Thus the truth of the matter is that according to Buddhism a categorical statement is no less valid or no less logical than an analytical statement just because it is categorical. Likewise an analytical statement is no less valid or no less logical than a categorical statement just because it is analytical. What matters is not whether a given statement is **categorical** or analytical but the context in relation to which the statement is **made**. It follows therefore that *vibhajjavāda* which refers to analytical or qualified explanations has no special claim to be more logical and more rational than *ekamsavāda* which refers to categorical explanations.

Equally important is the fact that the Buddha does not always follow the *vibhajjavāda* mode of explanation. For, as we have seen, there are three other rational ways of responding to questions and explaining propositions. Thus if we go by the early Buddhist discourses it is not possible to make a generalized statement that the Buddha is *Vibhajjavādī* without qualifying this statement. The correct position ought to be that the Buddha is *Vibhajjavādī* only in respect of those questions and propositions which call for an explanation according to the *vibhajjavāda* method.

Now this situation which we have just clarified poses an important problem in relation to the traditional account of the Third Buddhist Convocation. It may be recalled here that according to this account in answer to King Asoka's

question, "What was the Perfectly Enlightened One a Teacher of", the genuine Buddhist monks replied that he was *Vibhajjavādī* and the Venerable Moggliputta Tissa Thera who was with the King when the question was raised endorsed this reply as a correct representation of the Buddha. What is intriguing about this reply is that it gives no indication of the context in relation to which the Buddha is *Vibhajjavādī*. The term *vibhajjavādī*, as we have already clarified, implies a frame of reference within which it assumes significance. The unqualified statement that the Buddha is *Vibhajjavādī* gives the impression that the Buddha endorses only qualified statements (*vibhajjavāda*) and not statements of universal predication (*ekamsavāda*). This situation does not accord with what obtains in the early Buddhist texts, where, as we have noticed, no such claim is made. It is very unlikely that in the account of the convocation the term *vibhajjavādī* is used in a different sense either. How then are we to reconcile these two situations is the question that arises here.

In this connection Mrs Rhys Davids suggests that although any of the four modes of explanation is, "when apposite, equally commendable, yet it is easy to discern that whether established generalizations were being arranged by criticism or whether as in the Asokan age errors arising from uncritical interpretations of doctrine were to be expunged, the path to purity of views and the hallmark of sagacious exposition lay chiefly in the *distinguo* or the *vibhajjavāda* method of explanation."¹⁷ This possibility we cannot rule out completely. However, as Mrs Rhys Davids herself observes a universal predication (*ekamsavāda*) is no less logical than an analytical statement (*vibhajjavāda*).¹⁸ Hence her explanation gives rise to the question why only the *vibhajjavāda* method of explanation should have been singled out as the hallmark of sagacious exposition.

It is of course not impossible to give a broad interpretation to the term *vibhajjavāda* so as to include within it all the four modes of explanation. For it may be argued - although this may appear rather ingenious - that when one is asked for his opinion on a proposition, the most rational position he should take up before he gives his own explanation is to make a preliminary analysis of the proposition so as to find out to which of the four modes of explanation it belongs. Since this preliminary exercise involves the *vibhajjavāda* approach, the term *vibhajjavāda* could well be used as a generic term to

denote all the four modes of explanation. In such a situation of course the term would stand for the genus and for one of its species as well. An interpretation of this kind is, however, not supported by the texts where this fourfold classification is introduced.

In solving the problem why in the account of the Third Buddhist Convocation the Buddha is represented as *vibhajjavādī* we may do well to focus our attention on the following facts: It will be observed that in this account the term *vibhajjavādī* is used in such a way as to distinguish the teaching of the Buddha from such doctrines as eternalism and annihilationism. The obvious implication is that more than any other term it brings into focus the essential nature of the Buddha's teaching, the distinctive characteristic of Buddhist thought. However, as Mrs Rhys Davids rightly observes,¹⁹ it is rather surprising why this particular term was selected for this purpose when a term such as '*anattavādī*' or '*aniccavādī*' could have served the same purpose in a better way. Besides, the selection of such a term would not give rise to the kind of problem which the use of the term *vibhajjavādī* has given rise to. We cannot certainly say that the authors of the account were not aware of the true import of this term either. What both circumstances suggest is that there was an important historical reason why the term *vibhajjavādī* could not be suppressed. Behind the use of this term there seems to lie a nucleus of historical truth which is unwittingly expressed here. What this nucleus of historical truth is will become clear if we examine here the main currents and cross-currents of Buddhist thought in the hundred years that preceded the Asokan era.

This is the period which saw the beginnings of the doctrinal systematization known as the Abhidharma and its crystallization into a number of traditions. As far as the Theravāda is concerned the most important doctrinal development is the one relating to the *dhamma* - theory. The theory seeks to analyse the whole of empirical existence into a number of basic factors while rejecting a metaphysical reality which serves as a background to them. These basic factors, known as *dhamma*, are either mental or physical and in their combination they are said to make up our world of sensory experience. Both the empiric individuality and the material world in which it finds its being are finally analysable to these mental and physical *dhammas* without leav-

ing any residue to be interpreted as a substance. Although the *dhammas* are presented as if they were discrete entities existing independently they should be understood as interdependent nodes in a complex web of relationships. It is only for the purpose of definition and description that things are artificially dissected. In actuality the world given to experience is a vast network of interwoven relations. This is a brief summary of the view of existence which the Theravāda Abhidharma developed with the *dhamma* - theory as its foundation.

The first doctrinal controversy which this new development gave rise to related to the definition of 'person' (*puggala*) in the context of the *dhamma* theory. Is the person the same as the sum total of the *dhammas* into which the person is analysed? Or is the person distinct from them and is therefore obtainable as a true and ultimate fact of existence (*saccikatthaparamatthena upaiabbhati*)?²⁰ The arguments and counter-arguments of those who proposed and opposed this view are found recorded in the *Kathāvatthu* of the Pali Abhidharma Pitaka. The Theravāda position is that what we call 'person' is a convention-based concept (*sammuti, pannatti*) superimposed on a congeries of ever-changing mental and physical *dhammas*. To admit 'person' as an ultimate fact of existence (*saccikatthaparamattha*) is but a veiled recognition of the belief in a soul entity.²¹ The opposite position, which came to be maintained by the Vatsiputriyas, the followers of Vatsiputra, is based on the contention that the Abhidharma doctrine of elements leads to a process of depersonalization. It eliminates the person as an agent of action and thus fails to provide a satisfactory explanation for the concepts of rebirth and moral responsibility. Hence they insist on the necessity of recognizing the person in addition to the impersonal *dhammas*. This so called 'person', they maintain, is neither the same as the mental and physical *dhammas* into which the empiric individuality is analysed nor something different from them.²²

There is evidence to suggest that it was during the reign of King Bindusara of the Maurya dynasty that the Vatsiputriyas seceded from the Theravādins.²³ The main basis of their theory is the need to recognize a constant factor besides the changing *dhammas*. About two decades later, during the reign of King Asoka, this same issue in a somewhat different form brought about another controversy within the fraternity of the Theravadins. It related to the

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degree of reality that should be assigned to the mental and physical *dhammas* in the three divisions of time. If the *dhammas*, as generally believed, exist only in the present phase of time how could one explain Buddhist teachings which involve past and future phenomena? According to the doctrine of karma, for instance, the past karma can have its effects in the present or in the future. Again the phenomenon of memory involves the remembrance of thoughts and images which have already ceased to exist. It is a psychological postulate accepted by almost all Buddhists that two or more consciousnesses cannot exist at one and the same time. This necessarily implies that when one examines one's own thoughts it is the past consciousness that becomes an object of the present consciousness. It is also claimed that one who has developed the paranormal faculty of retro-cognition can remember one's own past births in the samsaric process. Again according to the theory of perception a perceptual process requires a number of thought-moments to culminate in cognition. It follows therefore that a sense datum which has impinged on a sense organ could never be grasped if it does not 'persist' until it is fully cognized. In view of these and similar Buddhist doctrines which involve past and future phenomena it came to be speculated whether the past and the future *dhammas* do really exist in some kind of subtle form. The fact that in the discourses of the Buddha the totality of the five *khandhas* (aggregates into which the individual being is analysed) is emphasized with reference to the three divisions of time, too, seems to have encouraged such speculations.²⁴

These speculations, as the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Vijñānakāyaśāstra* show, gave rise to a doctrinal controversy, where the question at issue was: *Sabbam sabbadā atthi* = Do all exist always? Rendered into more general terms, this means whether the *dhammas* into which empirical existence is analysed persist in the three divisions of time, the past, the present and the future. Those who believed that Buddhist teachings presuppose the principle of tritemporal existence gave this question a categorical answer in the affirmative (*ekamsavāda*). They came to be known as Sarvāstivādins, those who adhere to the 'all exist theory'.²⁵ There are also reasons to believe that those who gave this question a qualified answer and thus accepted a modified version of the theory came to be known as Vibhajjavādins. The best evidence for this come from the *Abhidharmakośābhāṣya* of Ācārya Vasubandhu, where we get the following definition of the term *vibhajjavādin*:

*Ye tu kecit asti yat pratyutpannam adattaphalam cātītaṃ karma, kimcin nāsti yad dattaphalam atītamanāgataṃ ceti vibhajya vadanti te vibhajyavādiṇaḥ.*²⁶

Those who maintain after having analysed that some things exist, namely the present and the past karma which has not borne its fruit and that some things do not exist, namely the past (*karma*) which has borne its fruit and the future are called *vibhajyavādins*.

In the commentary to the *Kathāvatthu* and in Vasumitra's treatise on the Buddhist sects the above thesis is attributed to the Kassapikas/Kāśyapīyas, a Buddhist sect which seceded from the Sarvāstivādins.²⁷ If this identification is correct why the Kassapikas/Kāśyapīyas came to be known as Vibhajyavādins is very clear. As the above quotation shows their answer to the question of tritemporal existence follows the *vibhajyavāda* mode of explanation: While they affirm the reality of the present and a part of the past, they deny the reality of the future and part of the past.

It is against this background that we should understand how the Theravādins responded to this controversial issue. As recorded in the *Kathāvatthu* their argument is as follows:

The definition of 'past' as 'something that has ceased - that is, departed, changed, gone away' and of 'future' as 'something that is not yet born, not yet come to be, not yet come to pass, has not happened, not befallen, is not manifested' excludes the possibility of its being reckoned as 'existing'. If the term 'exists' is predicable of all the three divisions of time, then the attributes of one become applicable to the other two as well. The preterition of the past, the presentness of the present and the futurity of the future become equally applicable and hence mutually convertible, resulting in the complete obliteration of all distinctions between the three divisions of time. It is contended by the Sarvāstivādins that when a present thing ceases to exist, it loses its 'presentness' but not its 'thingness', just as a white clothe when dyed gives up its 'whiteness' but not its 'clothesness'. In a counter-argument the Theravādins contend that in an expression such as 'present material aggregate' in whichever order the two terms 'present' and 'mate-

rial aggregate' are used, if no distinction is made between them and hence if they are reckoned 'as identical, as of one import, as the same, as of the same content and origin', then when one says that the 'present material aggregate' has ceased to exist, one must admit that the material aggregate has given up not only its 'presentness' but also its 'materiality'. To admit the cessation of one and to deny the cessation of the other is not valid because they are not two distinct entities. If, as the Sarvāstivādins assert, the material aggregate retains its materiality, then it becomes something persistent, permanent and eternally existing, an idea which even the Sarvāstivādins are averse to admit, although their theory of tritemporal existence seems to lead to such a conclusion.²⁸

The commentators clarify this further when they observe that although each *dhamma* is said to have its own-nature (*sabhāva*) or its own characteristic (*salakkhaṇa*) this so called own-nature or own-characteristic is **not different** from the *dhamma* itself.²⁹ It is only for the convenience of understanding (*sukhagahanattham*) that such a dichotomy is assumed to exist where there is in fact no such dichotomy (*abhede bhedaparikkappā*).³⁰ When a *dhamma* arises in the present moment it is not the case that its future own nature becomes manifest in the present, or when it ceases to exist it is not the case that its present own nature continues to persist in the past. Having been not the *dhammas* arise (*ahutvā sambhonti*) and after having been they cease to exist (*hutvā pativenti*). There is no reservoir (*sannidhi*) from which they come and there is no receptacle (*sannicaya*) to which they go.³¹ In the case of *dhammas* one cannot speak of an arrival (*āgamana*) or a departure (*niggamana*) for they have no existence before their appearance and after their disappearance. If they appear it is not that they come from somewhere (*na kuto ci āgaccanti*); if they disappear it is not that they go anywhere (*na kuhiñ ci gacchanti*). With no pre-existence (*pubbanta*) and post - existence (*aparanta*) they have their existence only in the present and that too in dependence on conditions (*paccayāyattavutti*). If one wants to speak of a past and future existence of *dhammas*, then it is a *dhamma*'s nascent and cessant phases that must be so considered, for a *dhamma* does not exist before its genesis and after its cessation (*pāgabhāvavidhamsanabhāva*). If anything can be predicated of the past and the future *dhammas* it is only their absolute non-existence (*sabbena sabbam natthi*).³²

In the light of these observations the Theravāda response to the problem of tritemporal existence (*Sabbam sabbadā atthi?*) can be stated as follows: The *dhammas* in the present division of time exist. The *dhammas* in the past division of time and the *dhammas* in the future division of time do not exist. Here, too, one cannot fail to notice the *vibhajjavāda* mode of explanation, although it does not fall on all fours with that of the Kāśyapīyas/Kassapikas. The similarity is only in the mode of explanation and not in the explanation itself. As in the case of the Kāśyapīya/Kassapika, in the Theravada response, too, there is neither unconditional affirmation nor unconditional negation (*ekamsavāda*). While the existence of the present *dhammas* is admitted, the existence of the past and future *dhammas* is denied (*vibhajjavāda*). We can describe the Theravāda explanation either as one of conditional assertion or as one of conditional negation depending on how we look at the explanation. In whichever way we seek to describe it, it remains an explanation by way of *vibhajjavāda*.

Why the Theravāda position did not warrant a categorical assertion or a categorical negation needs clarification. A categorical answer in the affirmative amounts to an acceptance of the theory of tritemporal existence - a position which the Theravādins vehemently opposed. A categorical answer in the negative is to deny not only the existence of the *dhammas* in the past and the future but also of the *dhammas* in the present as well - a situation which easily leads to the collapse of the *dhamma* - theory. No Buddhist school in fact could reject the theory of tritemporal existence *in into*. To do so is to accept the most improbable situation that the present itself does not exist. If one does not accept the theory, the only way out is to accept a modified version of it. And any such version necessarily involves the *vibhajjavāda* approach to the problem. This situation is true of the Theravādins' position as well. What they did was not to reject the theory but to accept a modified version of it, according to which only the *dhammas* in the present division of time exist. And it was only through the *vibhajjavāda* mode of explanation that this position could be presented.

This *vibhajjavāda* approach of the Theravādins to the problem under consideration could also be seen in the *Milindapañha*, the Questions of King Milinda. Here, to the king's question, what is this thing called time, the Venerable Nagasena Thera replies: "There is time which is past, there is

time which is present, and there is time which is future.” Asked further whether ‘all time’, i.e the three phases of time exist, the Venerable Thera replies: “There is time which exists, there is time which does not exist. Those *samkhāras* which are past, by-gone, ceased to be, and have been completely dissolved are the time which does not exist. Those things which actualize now as karmic effect, those things which have the potentiality of actualizing so, and those which bring about life continuity elsewhere are the time which exists. In the case of living beings who are dead but are not born elsewhere, time does not exist. In the case of living beings who have attained *Parinibbāna*, time does not exist because of the fact that they have attained *Parinibbāna*.”³³

The foregoing observations suggest that, as in the case of Kāśyapīyas/Kassapikas, it was in relation to the controversial issue whether the *dhammas* exist in the three divisions of time (*Sabbam sabbadā atthi?*) that the Theravādins, too, came to be known as Vibhajjāvādins. There is also evidence to suggest that it was this same controversial issue that led to the summoning of the Third Buddhist Convocation. It is of course true that according to the traditional account what led to the convocation was a different state of affairs. It is said that the entry into the *Samgha* of believers from other religious persuasions who proclaimed their own views as the Word of the Buddha resulted in the postponement of the *Uposatha* for six consecutive years and that with the intervention of King Asoka a purification of the *Sāsana* was brought about at the end of which it was decided by the assembly of monks headed by the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera to convoke a council.

The discord in the *Samgha* which led to the intervention of King Asoka can be accepted as a historical fact. The king himself alludes to it in his Minor Pillar Edicts of Saranath, Kosambi and Sanci. What appears rather unlikely, however, is whether this was the state of affairs that actually led to the Third Buddhist Convocation. The traditional account appears to be a fusion of both history and legend where we could detect a confusion between two events both of which are historically true. One is the Buddhist controversy on tritemporal existence, which, we believe, led to the summoning of the convocation. The other is the disunity and the resulting state of the turmoil within the *Samgha* which led to the intervention of King Asoka.

If, as clearly implied by the traditional account, the convocation was summoned in order to refute the heretical views held by the heretics within the *Samgha*, then in the *Kathāvatthu*, the treatise compiled at the convocation we should expect a refutation of the self-same views. But what we get instead here is a criticism of the views held by Buddhists other than the orthodox Theravādins. The treatise does also record the arguments and counter-arguments of the Buddhist sects involved in the doctrinal controversy. Its third chapter called *Sabbamatthikathā* is a refutation, from the point of view of the Theravādins, of the Sarvastivāda theory which asserts the reality of all the three phases of time. Its fifth chapter called *Ekaccamatthī ti kathā* is likewise a refutation of the modified version of the theory held by the Kassapikas/Kāśyapīyas.

Another important fact which merits our attention here is the title given to the treatise compiled at the Third Buddhist Convocation, namely *Kathāvatthu*. Either by accident or by design it reminds us of the very cause that led to the summoning of the convocation, which, in our opinion, is the doctrinal controversy on tritemporal existence. In the discourses of the Buddha we are told that corresponding to the three divisions of time there can be three kinds of *kathāvatthu*, i.e. subjects of discussion.³⁴ Since the treatise in question, too, deals with the reality or otherwise of the *dhammas* in the three divisions of time we cannot overlook its resemblance to the three kinds of *kathāvatthu* referred to in the earlier texts.

A clue to the circumstances that led to the Third Buddhist Convocation could also be elicited from a very unlikely source. We refer here to the *Vijñānakāyaśāstra* of the Sarvastivāda Abhidharma Piṭaka, a work attributed to the Venerable Arahant Devasarman. What interests us here is the fact that its first chapter is called *Maudgalyāyanaskandhaka*. As De La Valle Poussin and many others since then have observed the reference here is to the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera who convened the Third Buddhist Convocation. Why a chapter of a book belonging to the Sarvastivāda should be named after a celebrated *thera* of the Theravāda is not far to seek. The chapter is intended as a refutation of the arguments adduced by the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera in rejecting the theory of tritemporal existence. It reminds us of the fifth chapter of the *Kathāvatthu* where we get the Theravāda critique of the theory. Thus the *Sabbamatthikathā* of the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Maudgalyāyanaskandhaka* of the *Vijñānakāyaśāstra*

represent two opposite positions taken up by the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins over an issue which separated them from each other in the third century B.C.

What we have observed so far on the Third Buddhist Convocation could be detected in its traditional account as well if the nucleus of historical material it contains could be separated from its legendary trappings. The account, in fact, contains an oblique reference, made rather unwittingly to the actual cause that led to the summoning of the convocation. This should become clear if we read this somewhat legendary account in between lines while identifying its basic historical ingredients in the following manner:

(1) The statement that in reply to King Asoka's question, what was the Buddha a teacher of?, some said that the Buddha was a teacher of eternalism could be interpreted as an oblique reference to the Sarvāstivādins. For their theory of tritemporal existence amounts to some kind of eternalism. In point of fact, in the post-Asokan Buddhist works one argument levelled against the Sarvāstivādins was that their theory was not much different from that of the Sāṃkhya.

(2) The statement that some said in reply that the Buddha was a teacher of semi-eternalism could be interpreted as an oblique reference to the Kassapikas/Kāśyapīyas, because their qualified version of the theory amounts to some kind of semi-eternalism.

(3) The reference to other theories such as annihilationism cannot be explained on a similar basis. These theories, together with the first two, are found in the miscellany of metaphysical views criticized in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*. Their being repeated may be to give the impression that the explanations given by the Sarvāstivādins and the Kassapikas/Kāśyapīyas are not different from the kind of speculative views criticized by the Buddha himself.

(4) The statement that the genuine Buddhist monks said in reply that the Buddha was *Vibhajjavādī* (*Vibhajjavādī Sammā Sambuddho*)

could be interpreted as an oblique reference to the orthodox Theravādins, headed by the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera, who followed the *vibhajjavāda* mode of explanation in their answer to the controversial issue. It is true that the Kassapikas/Kāśyapiyas, too, were Vibhajjavādins. However, what seems to be taken into consideration here is that the question at issue warranted *only* a *vibhajjavāda* explanation, although there could be more than one *vibhajjavāda* explanation, and certainly not an *ekamsavāda* explanation which the Sarvāstivādins opted to follow.

(5) The overall statement that the (saffron - clad) heretics who did not know that the Buddha was *Vibhajjavādī* were forced to wear white garments seems to refer to those dissident monks whose response to the controversial issue was different from that of the orthodox Theravādins and who were thus compelled to leave their ranks and establish themselves as a new sect called Sarvāstivādins. It is in this statement, more than in any other, that the confusion of the two historical events to which we have referred is most evident. The expulsion by king Asoka of some monks whose recalcitrant behaviour led to a serious discord within the *Sangha* (*cf.* minor Pillar edicts referred to above) seem to have been identified with the separation of a section of the Theravādins over a purely doctrinal issue which did not warrant the intervention of King Asoka.

One question often raised by historians who do not believe in the historicity of the Third Buddhist Convocation is why no reference is made to it in any of the Edicts of King Asoka. According to our understanding of the situation the question does not arise. For, as we have already suggested what led to the convocation was the Buddhist controversy on tritemporal existence, an issue which did not warrant the intervention of King Asoka. What is more unlikely than the temporal head of the State intervening in the settlement of a metaphysical problem the abstruse implications of which only the erudite monks would have understood. Even according to the traditional account it was not King Asoka but the assembly of monks headed by the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera who decided to convene a convocation after the purification of the *Sāsana* by the intervention of King Asoka.

Another question often raised is why unlike the first two Buddhist Convocations the third does not find mention in the literary sources of any of the other Buddhist schools. One observation made in this regard is that it was a 'party meeting' confined to the Theravādins and therefore it was ignored by others.³⁶ If this were so, then even the first two convocations have to be considered as 'party meetings', for we do not hear of a Buddhist Convocation participated by two or more schools of Buddhist thought. At the time of the first there were no schools of Buddhist Thought and the second was confined only to the Theravādins. As an answer to this question we would like to offer the following explanation:

If a number of Buddhist sects, or for that matter even if all of them, refer to the First Buddhist Convocation it is because of the following circumstance: At the time it was held there were no Buddhist sects and hence we could expect it to be recorded by the Buddhist sects that emerged subsequently. It is an event which belongs to their common history, an event which took place before the emergence of Buddhist sects. A similar situation we can see in the Second Buddhist Convocation as well. The Buddhist sects which seceded from the Theravāda during the period after the Second Convocation could be expected to record it because it was an event which took place before they branched off as different Buddhist sects.

But in the case of the Third Buddhist Convocation we have a different situation. We are not aware of the Theravāda undergoing a schism in India during the period after the Third Convocation. If it did undergo a schism resulting in two or more sects then we should expect all of them to record the convocation because it belongs to a period before their separation into different sects. But the history of Theravāda in India after its introduction to Sri Lanka is shrouded in mystery. For all what we know it was in Sri Lanka that the Theravāda split into three fraternities, known as Mahāvihāra, Abhayagiri and Jetavana. There is nothing to suggest that any of the three fraternities did not believe in the historicity of the Third Buddhist Convocation, for they all could refer to it as an event belonging to their common history. What we have clarified here should also explain why all information pertaining to the Third Buddhist Convocation is confined to the literary sources of Sri Lanka's Theravāda tradition.

In concluding this article it must be stated here that no other event in the history Buddhist thought seems to have exerted so much influence on its subsequent history than the Buddhist doctrinal controversy which we have been referring to. At its very outset, as we saw, it precipitated a crisis within the Theravāda fraternity which not only led to the summoning of what came to be known as *Tatiya-Mahā-Saṅgīti* but resulted in the emergence of a new school of Buddhist thought called Sarvāstivādins, as well. It is again this controversy that occasioned the emergence, this time, from among the ranks of the Sarvāstivādins themselves of yet another school of Buddhist thought called Kāśyapīyas/Kassapiyas. What is called *sarvāstivāda* or the 'all-exist-theory' which came into vogue as a result of this controversy played a very decisive role in determining the history of Buddhist thought in the centuries that followed. Among the post-Asokan Buddhist schools it became one of the hotly debated issues, resulting in a bewildering mass of arguments and counter-arguments which find mention in a host of literary works belonging to both the so called Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna traditions. After the Buddhist Convocation said to have been held in Jalandhara under the patronage of King Kanishka, the Vaibhāṣikas of Kāśmir became the chief exponents of this theory. Its main critics were the Sautrāntikas who came to be so known because they rejected the authenticity of the Abhidharma and accepted only the authority of the Sūtras.

What provoked much opposition to the theory was that it was said to lead to some kind of substantialism which was radically at variance with the Buddhist teaching on the non-substantiality of all phenomena. A detailed statement of the theory, together with its critique on the part of the Sautrāntikas is found in Ācārya Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. However, since his presentation of the subject was not fully acceptable to the Vaibhāṣikas it did not get a sympathetic response from them. It was in order to meet Ācārya Vasubandhu's criticism of this and other subjects pertaining to the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma that the Venerable Saṃghabhadra Thera composed his well known treatise called *Nyāyānusāra*, a work which has come down to us only in its Chinese translation. Among the Mahayanists it was mainly the Mādhyamikas who maintained a sustained criticism against the 'all-exist-theory' of the Sarvāstivādins. This is not to suggest that the Mādhyamikas were in sympathy with the position taken up by the Theravādins and the Sautrāntikas either. In their opinion the so called elements of existence (*dhamma / dharma*) are not real even in the present division of time.

Notes

1. *Dīpavaṃsa* (= *Dv.*), ed. B. C. Law, *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Colombo, Vol. VII, 1957-58, Nos. 1-4, pp. 58-59.
2. *Mahāvamsa*, PTS, Ch. V.
3. *Samantapāsādikā* (*Vinaya Aṭṭhakathā*), PTS, Vol. I, pp.60 ff.; *Kathāvatthupparakaṇa Aṭṭhakathā*, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1889, pp. 5-7.
4. Translation mainly based on *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna*, tr. N. A. Jayawikrama, PTS, 1961.
5. *Vamsatthappakāsini* (*Mahāvamsa Tikā*), PTS, Vol. I, p. 240.
6. *Sāratthadīpanī*, ed. Devarakkhita Thera, Colombo, 1933, p. 125.
7. *Vimativinodanī*, ed. Dhammadhara Thera, Colombo, 1935, p. 27.
8. See e. g. *Dīghanikāya*, PTS, Vol. I, p. 191 (*Ekaṃsika pi... mayā dhammā desitā paññattā, anekamsika pi... mayā dhammā desitā paññattā*).
9. *Anguttaranikāya*, PTS, Vol. I, p. 197.
10. *Ibid. loc. cit.*
11. *Dīghanikāya*, PTS, Vol. I, p. 185.
12. See e.g. *Cūlamālunkya-putta Sutta* in *Majjhimanikāya* and *Avyākata Saṃyutta* in *Samyuttanikāya*.
13. *Majjhimanikāya*, PTS, Vol. II, p. 197.
14. The overlooking of the context indicating adverbial form *ettha* has given rise to the misconception that the Buddha is always *Vibhajjavādī* and therefore that Buddhism can best be described as *Vibhajjavāda*. One implication of this misconception is that the use of the term *Vibhajjavāda* as another expression for Buddhism, more particularly for Theravāda Buddhism, is intended to emphasize its analytical, logical and rational elements. The beginning of this belief could perhaps be traced to R. C. Childer's *Dictionary of the Pali Language*, published in 1875, where the term *Vibhajjavāda* is explained as "Religion of Logic or Reason". In this connection Childers also took into consideration its earlier rendering into English by George Turner as "the religion of investigated truth" (George Turner, *Mahāvamsa Translation*, Colombo, 1968, p. 22). One of the earliest to endorse Childer's interpretation was Wilhelm Geiger who in his *Mahāvamsa Translation* (Colombo, 1938, reprinted, p. 22) observes that it renders the sense of the term very appropriately. Since then we find this interpretation being recognized and sometimes developed upon in a number of modern writings in the field of Buddhist studies. See e.g. George Grim, *The Doctrine of the Buddha: The Religion of Reason and Meditation*, Akademi-Verlog (reprinted), Berlin, 1958, p. 49 (The teaching of the Buddha is therefore a religion of reason; moreover, in the Canon it is characterized directly by the epithet *Vibhajjavāda*, a word which is translated in Childer's Pali Dictionary as "religion of logic or reason".); M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, University of Calcutta, 1933, Vol. II, p. 62; B. C. Law, *A history of Pali Literature*, London.

1933, Introduction, p. XII; PTS *Pali English Dictionary*, see under *vibhajati*; Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (reprinted), Colombo, 1956, p. 50, n. 2; N. A. Jayavikrama, *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna*, PTS, 1961, p. 22; Ven. Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka, *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms*, Colombo, 1950, see under *Vibhajjavāda*; K. N. Jayatilaka, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London, 1963, p. 171, n. 2. That *Vibhajjavāda* which refers to analytical and qualified statements is more logical and rational than *ekamsavāda* which stands for categorical statements or universal predications is not borne out by canonical texts. For details, see below, pp. 6 ff.

15. *Āṅguttaranikāya*, PTS, X, 94.

16. *Dīghanikāya*, PTS, Vol. I, p. 191.

17. *Points of Controversy or Subjects of Discourse (Kathāvatthupparāṇa)*, tr. S. Z. Aung and Mrs Rhys Davids, PTS, Introduction, pp. xi-xli.

18. *Ibid.* p. xli, n. 1.

19. *Ibid.* p. xli.

20. *Kathāvatthupparāṇa*, PTS, pp. 1 ff.

21. *Ibid. loc. cit.*; *Kathāvatthupparāṇa Aṭṭhakathā*, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1889, pp. 10 ff.

22. See *Kathāvatthu*, PTS, pp. 1 ff.; *Kathāvatthupparāṇa Aṭṭhakathā*, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1889, pp. 7 ff.; 'La Controverse du Temps et Puggala dans le *Vijñānakāya*', De La Valle Pousson, *Etudes Asiatiques*, Vol. VI; A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (revised edition), Delhi, 1990, p. 240 ff.; Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, London, 1962, pp. 122 ff.

23. See A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (revised edition), Delhi, 1990, p. 240.

24. Cf. *Yaṃ kiñci rūpam atītānāgatapaccuppannam ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā olārikam vā sukhumam vā yaṃ dūre santike vā sabbam rūpam*, applied to the other four aggregates, too. See *Samyuttanikāya*, PTS, vol. II, p. 252, Vol. III, pp. 68, 80.

25. See *Kathāvatthupparāṇa Aṭṭhakathā*, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1889, pp. 62 ff; *ye hi sarvamastīti vadanti atītāmanāgatam pratyutpannam ca te sarvāstivādah: Abhidharmakośābhāṣya*, p. 296

26. *Abhidharmakośābhāṣya*, p. 296

27. *Kathāvatthupparāṇa Aṭṭhakathā*, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1889, p. 50; 'Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist schools: A translation of the Hsuan-Chwang Version of Vasumitra's Treatise', tr. Jiryo Masuda (= Masuda), *Asia Major*, II, 1925, p. 16.

28. *Kathāvatthu*, PTS, pp. 115 ff.

29. See e.g. *Na ca sabhavā añño dhammo nāma atthi (Abhidhammāmūlaṭīkā*, ed. D. Paññāsāra Thera & P. Wimaladhamma Thera, Colombo, 1939, p. 21); *Dhammamattadīpanam sabhāvapadam (Ibid.* p. 70); *Dhammoti sabhāvo (Abhidhammatthavikāsinī*, ed. A. P. Buddhadatta Mahathera, Colombo, 1961, p. 210).

30. *Paramatthamañjusā (Visuddhimaggaṭīkā)*, ed. M. Dhammananda Mahathera, Colombo,

1928, pp. 484, 491. The attribution of duality to where there is no duality is also called 'tadākārasamāropana' and is further characterized as 'buddhiparikappitabheda' = a distinction constructed by the mind. Therefore all such superimposed distinctions are not valid in an ultimate sense: *Na nippariyayato labbhati* (*Abhidhammatthasaṅgahavibhāvinītikā*, ed. D. Pannananda Mahathera, Colombo, 1889, p. 4).

31. *Visuddhimagga*, PTS, Vol. I, p. 512; Cf. *Ahutvā sambhūtaṃ hutvā na bhavissati* (*Paṭisambhidāmagga*, PTS, p. 76).

32. *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha Vibhāvinī Tikā*, ed, D. Paññananda Mahathera, Colombo, 1889, p. 65.

33. *Milindapañha*, ed. B. Ananda Metteyya Mahathera, Colombo, 1962, pp. 44-45.

34. *Dīghanikāya*, PTS. Vol. III, p. 220; *Ānguttaranikāya*, PTS, Vol. I, p. 197.

35. *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, tr. De La Valle Pousson, Societe Belge d'Etudes Orientales(=AKV.), Paris, 1923-31, Introduction, p. XXXIV.

36. See H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism* (reprinted), Delhi, 1968, p. 110.

Buddha Loves Me! This I Know, for the Dharma Tells Me So

Gautama the Buddha through Christian Eyes

Donald K. Swearer

I intend no disrespect to either the Buddha or the Christ by my rewrite of Anna Bartlett Warner's 1859 Sunday school song, "Jesus Loves Me." That one might construct the Buddha in the image of a loving Jesus may be more startling or offensive to Buddhists (and also to Christians) than the modern, apologetic view of the Buddha as a rational renouncer. Versions of both can be textually justified; however, each is a reification that reflects the bias of the interpreter. Both ignore the complexity of the figure of the Buddha within the varied and diverse traditions of Buddhism. My starting point in the following essay acknowledges this complexity as well as the inevitable limitations of my personal interpretation of the Buddha, necessarily conditioned by my experience. I propose to structure the essay around two polarities--universal/particular and wisdom/compassion--looking first at the Buddha and then briefly reflecting dialogically at the end of each section on the figure of the Christ.

Buddha: Universal and Particular

In my personal experience in Buddhist Asia, especially Thailand, and my studies of Buddhist traditions, in particular the Theravada, I have been impressed by the creative tension between the universal and particular dimensions of the figure of the Buddha. Even the modern Western view of the Buddha evidences this tension. Typically the word *Buddha* evokes the story of Prince Siddhattha's renunciation of his royal status, subsequent quest for enlightenment, and eventual realization of *nibbana*.¹ In the hands of a comparative mythologist such as Joseph Campbell, the detailed embellishments of the Buddha's sacred biography are absorbed into the tripartite, monomyth structure of the hero's narrative--separation, attainment, return. For Campbell, the story of the historical Buddha, Siddhattha Gotama, represents a rite of passage, a deep psychological truth of self-discovery symbolized by other heroes in world mythology. Despite the antistructuralist critique by historical and textual scholars, as well as the feminist criticism that the heroic journey does not reflect women's experience, in one form or another the Buddha reified as an exemplar of the universal paradigm of the individual's journey of self-realization continues to capture the Western imagination.

A somewhat more sophisticated version of the universal hero motif is the Buddha as 'rational renouncer,' an interpretation favored by both Buddhists and scholars of Buddhism who portray the Buddha as an empiricist and pragmatist somewhat on the order of William James. In this view, Prince Siddhattha's quest was a rational response to the experience of suffering, and the truth he perceived on the night of his enlightenment was nothing more nor less than a direct perception of the universal law of cause and effect obscured to ordinary awareness. De-emphasizing both the ascetical and devotional aspects of the Buddha's sacred biography, the rational renouncer school of thought places its emphasis on epistemological transformation characterized in Buddhist texts as "seeing things as they really are."

The Buddha as universal hero and as rational renouncer can be critiqued as modernized, rationalized, westernized reifications of the Buddha, an example of the 'orientalist' distortion that characterized the colonial project. Charles Hallisey has pointed out that such reconstructions of the Buddha were not merely the products of Western scholars but owed much to Asian

Buddhists as well.² But are we to assume that throughout the history of Buddhism, similar hermeneutical moves and debates over the nature of the Buddha did not exist? I find a tension in the Buddhist tradition between two contrasting images of the Buddha: as an exemplar of a universal truth, and as a being defined by the contingencies of human particularities.

Theravada Buddhists find strong support in the *sutta* for a humanistic interpretation of the Buddha. In particular, they argue that the Buddha of the early Buddhist canonical texts specifically denied that he was a god, and that he was a teacher of the truth he perceived at his enlightenment. They find support for this view in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, wherein the Buddha tells his followers that when he dies the teaching and the disciplinary rules he promulgated--the dharma and *vinaya*--will be his successor. They also point to the *sutta* passage where the Buddha says, "Whoever sees me sees the *dharma*; whoever sees the *dharma* sees me"³ to support the position that the dharma overshadows the historical Buddha or that the teachings of the Buddha supersede his person.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, one of Thailand's most creative Buddhist thinkers, contends that the statement, "Whoever sees me sees the *dharma*" has implications far beyond a portrayal of the Buddha as a historical person:

The Buddha in everyday language refers to the historical Enlightened being, Gotama Buddha. It refers to a physical man of flesh and bone who was born in India over two thousand years ago, died, and was cremated. This is the meaning of the Buddha in everyday language. Considered in terms of *dharma* language, however, the word Buddha refers to the Truth that the historical Buddha realized and taught, the *dharma* itself. Now the *dharma* is something intangible, it is not something physical, certainly not flesh and bones. Yet the Buddha said it is one and the same as the Enlightened One. Anyone who fails to see the *dharma* cannot be said to have seen the Enlightened One. The Buddha is one and the same as that truth by which he became the Buddha, and anyone who sees the truth can be said to have seen the true Buddha.⁴

It is equally true that Pali texts support the view that the Buddha was highly revered not simply as a mirror of the dharma but as a being to be venerated, as a source of merit, and even to be worshiped. It is argued, for instance, that the title *Bhagavant* (Blessed One) was more than an honorific, and that following his death the Buddha as an object of devotion formed the basis for the cult of relics and images. To be more precise, one finds in the Buddhist *sutta* what can be characterized as a controversy between the philosophers and the devotees over the nature of the person of the Buddha: whether the Buddha should be seen as the mirror of the dharma or as the subject of devotion whose very body radiates supramundane power. The *Sutta to Prince Bodhi* (*Bodhirajakumara Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya*, no. 85) illustrates this controversy. The good prince invites the Blessed One to his palace in order to pay him homage. As the Buddha approaches the entrance, the prince says, "Venerable sir, let the Blessed One step on the cloth, let the Sublime One step on the cloth, that it may lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time." To this request made thrice, Ananda, the Buddha's chief disciple, replies, "Prince, let the cloth be removed. The Blessed One will not step on a strip of cloth; the Tathagata has regard for future generations." The text implies conflicting opinions concerning the person of the Buddha, giving precedence to the view that the body of the Buddha is not to be venerated as a source of merit."

The main point is that in Buddhist texts and Buddhist practice, I have found a tension between identifying the Buddha with a universal truth beyond form and image and the various ways of particularizing the person of the Buddha that range from apocryphal texts designed to promote Buddha bhakti (devotion) to veneration of the Buddha's bodily relics. Currently I am completing

a study of the northern Thai ritual of Buddha image consecration. Attending several of these all-night ceremonies--a ritual reenactment of the night of the Buddha's enlightenment--has been among the most moving experiences of my life. I have been particularly impressed with the ritual's underlying meaning of making the Buddha present as the image effectively becomes the Buddha's surrogate. In doing so the image (*buddharupa*=form of the Buddha) makes the universal dharma present. In particularizing that which is universal, the Tathagata (a thus-gone-one in lineage of the Enlightened Buddha) becomes the *Bhagavant*--Blessed One. Through the chanting of sacred mantras, the recital of the story of the Buddha's enlightenment, the presence of holy monks, and a night devoted to meditation, the Buddha image consecration ritual transforms the Buddha image into a fusion of the universal dharma and the saint known as the Buddha.

In an earlier book on interreligious dialogue, I pointed to several ways in which my study of Buddhism provided insight into my understanding of Christianity; for example, how the Buddhist doctrine of not-self (*anatta*) enlarged my comprehension of Paul's claim, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."² In a similar vein, my attempts to come to terms with the various ways Buddhists have viewed the Buddha through history and currently experience the Buddha in rituals such as the Buddha image consecration ceremony have enlarged my understanding of the paradox of the Incarnation, of God becoming Jesus the Christ, of the universal Logos becoming flesh, of the infinite becoming finite. Though seemingly worlds apart, participating in Buddha image consecration rituals in northern Thailand has given new meaning to Kierkegaard's subtle dialectic I studied nearly forty years earlier, the dialectic of the incarnate God overcoming the dualism of the finite and the infinite and in this fusion transforming the boundaries of ordinary logical thinking that incarcerate the religious imagination. In the expanse of Chiang Rai's Temple of the Emerald Buddha in the far north of Thailand, with the darkness illuminated by altar candles and the silence broken only by the rhythmic chanting of monks seated before newly consecrated Buddha images, it was as though I experienced in the fullness of time not only the instantiation of the universal dharma, but the enfleshment of the universal Logos.

Buddha: Knowledge and Compassion

In my study of Buddhism I have encountered another major tension in the way Buddhists experience the Buddha, a polarity between knowledge (*pañña*) and compassion (*karuna*). The tension is represented at the very beginning of the legendary life of the Buddha. The well-known story of Siddhartha's renunciation of his family and princely status to search for the supreme knowledge (*nibbana*) that defined his Buddhahood (*samma-sambuddha*) is taken as the paradigm of Buddhism's valorization of knowledge as the supreme value. Ignorance drives the Wheel of Rebirth (*samsaracakka*). Only by overcoming ignorance and mental defilement (*kilesa*) does the Buddha or anyone else realize the wisdom-gone-beyond (*gate gate paragate bodhi svaha*).

One has only to read cursorily in the vast corpus of canonical and noncanonical Buddhist literature or observe Buddhist attitudes and behaviors regarding the Buddha to realize that the Tathagata represents much more than wisdom (*pañña*). For example, in the *Jataka* literature where the future Buddha appears in a variety of human and animal guises, the Blessed One personifies a wide range of moral and spiritual values, not solely the paradigmatic value of wisdom. The last ten of the 547 Pali canonical tales and their appended commentary represent an amalgam of moral perfections (*parami*) that define the moral prerequisites for Buddhahood. In their various permutations, these virtues--ranging from renunciation and equanimity to patience and loving-kindness--play a major role in all Buddhist traditions. Perhaps best known to Western students of Buddhism are the Mahayana bodhisattva perfections delineated in such texts as

Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* (Entering the Path of Enlightenment). Above all other characteristics, wisdom and compassion define bodhisattvahood.

Included in the final ten Pali *Jataka* is the story of Sama, the personification of loving-kindness (*metta*).⁶ It is a tale of self-sacrificial, redemptive love. Sama lives a life of tender, caring devotion to his parents, Dukulaka and Parika, who, while living in the forest as ascetics, are blinded by a poisonous snake. One day King Piliyaka of Benares is hunting in the forest and observes Sama filling a water jar. Nearby, deer are drinking from the same pool, unafraid because Sama embodies loving-kindness toward all living creatures. Thinking that the youth must be a *deva* (god) or *naga* (a serpent divinity), the king wounds Sama with an arrow so that he will not escape. Sama falls dying to the ground but bears no grudge or hostility toward the king. When Piliyaka learns Sama's identity and that he is the only support for his blind parents, the king is filled with remorse. Vowing to protect and care for Sama's parents, the king goes to tell them of their son's death. The parents, like Sama himself, bear no malice toward the king and ask to be taken to see their son's body. There they make a solemn Act of Truth (*sacca-kiriya*) while praying by their son's side. As a consequence, the poison is released from Sama's body and he is restored to life. At the same time, through divine intervention, his parents regain their eyesight. Sama then teaches the marveling king the lesson of how *deva* protect those who care for others, in this case his parents, with loving-kindness (*metta*).

Although compassion and loving-kindness appear to complement wisdom as moral virtues prerequisite to Buddhahood and figure prominently in narrative literature associated with the future Buddha, one also encounters a tension in the tradition between wisdom and compassion. In the canonical story of the Buddha's *nibbana*, following his enlightenment the Blessed One debates whether or not to teach the dharma and share with others the supreme truth he discovered. His affirmative decision is celebrated as a prime example of the Buddha's great compassion (*maha-karuna*).⁷

When he surveys the world following his enlightenment, the Buddha perceives that few people will be able to understand his teaching. Therefore, he deliberates:

Enough with teaching the Dharma
That even I found hard to reach;
For it will never be perceived
By those who live in lust and hate.

Those dyed in lust, wrapped in darkness
Will never discern this abstruse Dharma
Which goes against the worldly stream,
Subtle, deep, and difficult to see.

Fortunately, Brahma Sahampati intercedes on behalf of the world by pleading with the Buddha: "The world will be lost, the world will perish, since the mind of the Tathagata, accomplished and fully enlightened, inclines to inaction rather than teaching the Dharma." Upon hearing Brahma's plea, the Blessed One "out of compassion for all beings surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha" and decided to teach the supreme truth he had attained in his enlightenment. The story demonstrates that although priority is given to the wisdom of enlightenment, the most complete expression of Buddhahood includes the compassion that motivates the Buddha to teach the dharma to a suffering humanity. The Tathagata's stated mission, that he came to teach the cause of suffering and the way to its cessation, takes on the meaning of an act of cosmic compassion. This story can be seen as an anticipation of the cosmic dimensions of the compassion of the Amida Buddha in the Japanese Pure Land tradition.

The compassion of the Buddha bears a family resemblance to other moral qualities--in particular, empathy (*anukampa*), ⁸ the ability to identify with the suffering of others (*samvega*), ² the detachment from self-interest that allows one to delight in the joy of another solely for the sake of the other (*mudita*), and to love others nonpreferentially (*upekkha*). Because these qualities are often associated with both healing and the feminine, it is not surprising that the Buddha assumes both healing and feminine properties. In the *Lōtus Sutra*, for example, the Teacher of the dharma is equated with spiritual healing, and other Mahayana sutras celebrate healing Buddhas and bodhisattvas, in particular. ¹⁰ In the Tantrayana tradition of Tibet, wisdom and compassion are feminized in the form, of Prajñāparamita and Tara and other female divinities often depicted with male counterparts. ¹¹

From the standpoint of devotional belief and practice, the Buddha's compassion is often understood not only as the power of the Blessed One to release the devotee from the ontological condition of suffering (*dukkha*), but also to protect and intercede directly on behalf of one's welfare or the welfare of others in mundane, practical ways. When a young college student from Chiang Mai visits the Flower Garden Monastery (Wat Suan Dok) before her final exam, purchases a small square of gold leaf and kneeling in prayer applies it to the forehead of one of the Buddha images, she is motivated less by honoring the Buddha than the hope the act will improve her chances of doing well on the exam. In other words, she hopes that the Buddha acting out of enlightened compassion will intercede on her behalf.

Virtually all Buddhist ceremonies have as part of their underlying meaning the purpose of protecting those gathered together for a particular occasion, be it an ordination, funeral, or Sabbath meeting, as well as protecting those not present or deceased. Throughout Theravada Asia--Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia--the primary texts recited at all meritorious (*puñña*) rituals are found in a handbook compiled in Sri Lanka called *Paritta*, meaning "protection." One example included in the collection is the *Angulimāla Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya*, #86). At the Buddha's request, the monk Angulimāla vows an Act of Truth that the Blessed One assures the holy monk will guarantee the birth of a healthy child.

The traditional conclusion of merit-making ceremonies in northern Thailand ends with the following recitation by the monks assembled for the meeting:

May all living beings who suffer be free from suffering;
 Those who meet with danger be free from danger;
 Those who are sorrowful be free from Sorrow.
 May all divine beings (*deva*) approve
 Of the merit we have accumulated;
 So that by their power we may gain wealth.
 Give generously, observe the precepts faithfully,
 Meditate continuously.
 May I be protected by the powers of the Buddha,
 The *paccekabuddhas*, and the *arahants*.

The words suggest that the compassion of the Buddha refers not only to his teaching about the cause of suffering and the way to its cessation, but also the hope that the Buddha's Act of Truth--an act that defeated the powerful forces of Mara at the Tree of Enlightenment--will protect me and my loved ones in all kinds of circumstances and situations. Indeed, as a sign of that hope, devotees may wear a neck chain from which a Buddha amulet is suspended.

I do not mean to imply that in practice Buddhists in Thailand always resolve the tension between wisdom and compassion on the side of compassion reduced to the Buddha's power to protect or guarantee material success. I have been impressed by the high regard with which Thai Buddhists hold meditation not only in theory but also in practice. To be sure, I know Buddhists who meditate with the same apotropaic intention that informs their merit-making rituals; however, I have observed devotees in village temples meditating with a dedication and quiet intensity that suggests a higher purpose, a quest for the Buddha's 'wisdom-gone-beyond.'

What about Christianity? Is there a tension between the Christ of wisdom and the Jesus of love? Does the Gospel of John exhibit a tension between the creative power of wisdom set from the beginning of time and the redemptive power of God's love in time and space? And does Paul suggest that true knowledge--not seeing-through-a-glass-darkly knowledge--and universal compassion or agapic love are mutually complimentary, much as are the Buddha's enlightenment and his great compassion? Am I reading the polarity of wisdom and compassion that I see in Buddhism into John and Paul and, by extension, the Christian theological tradition more broadly from Augustine to Sallie McFague? If so, am I Buddhasizing my tradition, or is it rather that my experience of Buddhism has opened up for me new insights and interpretations as I wrestle for personal meaning in my dialogical faith betwixt-and-between Christianity and Buddhism? I attended a funeral at my home church yesterday. What I heard in scripture and sermon and saw on the faces and in the tears of family and friends was not only the wisdom and love of the universal Christ, but the particular assurance and protection seen in the figure of Jesus surrounded by children framed in the stained glass window by the pulpit. "Jesus loves me! This I know. . . ."

Notes

1. Since my primary referent is to Theravada Buddhism, I have chosen to use Pali rather than Sanskrit spellings, such as *nibbana* instead of nirvana, unless a reference is specifically to Mahayana traditions.
2. Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 31-61. For an essay on the Western construction of Indian Buddhism, see Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," in *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 1-22.
3. Presumably the Christian version of the Buddha's claim would be, "Whosoever sees me [Jesus] sees God [the Father]."
4. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa*, ed. Donald K. Swearer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 127-128. For a fuller discussion of Buddhadasa's interpretation of the Buddha, see Donald K. Swearer, "Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's Interpretation of the Buddha," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64 no. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 134-154.
5. Donald K. Swearer, *Dialogue: The Key to Understanding Other Religions* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977).
6. For a summary of the last ten *Jataka*, see Elizabeth Wray et. al, *The Ten Lives of the Buddha* (New York: Weatherhill, 1972). Included in the volume are color plates of Thai temple murals of the tales. This summary is adapted from Elizabeth Lyons, *The Tosachat in Thai Painting*, Thailand Culture, New Series, no. 22 (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1963), pp. 9-11.
7. *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* (The Noble Search). *Majjhima Nikaya*, no. 26. See *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom, 1995), pp. 253-268.
8. As the Buddha taught the dharma for the benefit of humankind, so should monks be motivated by empathy for the world. *Sangiti Sutta*, *Digha Nikaya* iii, p. 213.
9. For the linkage of *samvega* and acting on behalf of others, see *Sangiti sutta*, *Digha Nikaya* iii, p. 214.
10. See Raoul Birnbaum, *The Healing Buddha* (Boulder: Shambala, 1979).
11. See Robert A. F. Thurman, *Wisdom and Means: The Sacred Art of Tibet* (New York: Tibet House), 1991.

CONSCIOUSNESS EXPLAINED AS AN INTERNAL INTEGRATING SYSTEM

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Abstract: The paper offers an account of consciousness as a biological process. All its theoretical concepts are derived from the biological context and accurately defined in causal and functional terms. To cover the essence of what is commonly meant by the word 'consciousness', and to avoid confusion through a selective or theoretically biased interpretation of that word, the paper addresses the dimensions of awareness which the word denotes according to the dictionaries of the English language, viz., an awareness of the surrounding world, of the self, and of one's thoughts and feelings. These are examined at the primary levels at which they might exist also in nonhuman species.

It suggests that they can be jointly accounted for by a set of just three empirically supported hypotheses about the underlying brain processes. According to these hypotheses, the physical basis of consciousness resides in a set of functional relationships which are deeply embedded in the brain's neural organisation and integrate the different kinds of internal representations that participate in the organism's transactions with the outside world. The result is an integrated global representation which operates as a coherent functional unit in these transactions, being effectively suspended when they are suspended, as in deep sleep. In the final sections the paper examines the composition of the three main categories of internal representation concerned, and suggests that at the physiological level the main body of these representations consists of acquired states of conditional expectancy or their derivatives.

I: Introduction

Taming the problem of consciousness

Consciousness is the central aspect of our mental life and lies at the heart of the mind–brain relation. Yet, it has remained a problem which has been described as 'just about the last remaining mystery and one about which we are still in a terrible muddle' (Dennett, 1991). Other mysteries, Dennett says, such as those remaining in atomic physics or cosmology, may not have been solved, but at least they have been *tamed*.

I shall suggest that this problem, too, can at least be *tamed*, in the sense of finding a general explanation in accurately defined causal and functional terms of the brain processes underlying consciousness — provided only that one takes a detached view of consciousness as a property of the biological organism and follows the methodical approach of the natural sciences. This consists of two main steps:

STEP 1.

A description or definition of the phenomena to be explained. It requires special care in the case of consciousness, since the notion of consciousness has fuzzy bounds, and it is a common complaint that no two writers on that subject seem to be talking about quite the same thing. There is also the temptation to identify consciousness with just one aspect of it, whereas it is obviously desirable for a scientific account of consciousness to cover the full dimensions of awareness which the word 'consciousness' commonly denotes, at least according to the dictionaries. A precise definition of the word, of course, can only be the end-point of a theory of consciousness, just as the concepts of *work* and *energy* found a precise definition only as part of a theory of mechanics.

STEP 2.

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A search for hypotheses which are

- (i) consonant with the conceptual framework of the natural sciences, in this case the physiological,
- (ii) formulated with the precision required by the natural sciences generally,
- (iii) able to explain the phenomena concerned in the terms desired, and
- (iv) supported by the empirical evidence.

The need to give equal weight to both steps, and to satisfy the conditions attached to the second, is not always fully appreciated. Indeed, it can be argued that we lack a scientific theory of consciousness largely through this lack of rigorous scientific approaches to the nature of consciousness as a property of the biological organism.

The importance of a general scientific model of consciousness is not always appreciated by psychologists, despite the fact that consciousness is what psychology studies. Experimental psychologists often look no further than *ad hoc* hypotheses which enable them to explain or predict the outcome of specific experiments in their specialised field of research, ignoring the wider context. This, too, is a mistake. For example, recent discussions of cases in which an anaesthetised patient regained consciousness during an operation without being able to signal this, owing to the still continuing paralysis, have highlighted the need to understand the general nature of the brain processes underlying consciousness even when dealing with a narrow set of problems.

As a broader example, take the physiology of vision and the vast progress that has been made in understanding the analysing and segregating operations performed on the received inputs in various areas of the visual cortex — in the perception of form, motion, and colour, for example (Zeki, 1993). Yet, one has to realise that *what we experience as our visual perception of the surrounding world consists of the conscious part of the current contributions which the eyes make to the brain's internal model of the surrounding world*. Hence the full story of the physiology of vision cannot be told until the nature of that internal model is understood, plus the conditions which its components must satisfy to enter consciousness. Both are objects of the present enquiry.

The scope of this paper

Current brain research is mainly devoted to the extension of the empirical base, and it is sometimes suggested that this should remain so: that, in view of the immense complexity of the brain and the volume of still missing data, the time is not yet ripe for theories. This is a mistake on two counts. First, science is not 'mechanically ground out' (to use Popper's phrase) by generalising the findings of observation. It depends in equal measure on the imaginative conjectures of theorists. Hypotheses suggest to the researchers what questions to ask, where to look and what things to do. Second, before one can aim at hypotheses that explain the physical basis of consciousness, and mental events generally, in concrete neural terms — the ultimate object in this field — a vital intermediate step can now already be accomplished by remaining initially at a more abstract level. This consists of hypotheses which explain the physical basis of consciousness merely in terms of patterns of causal and functional relationships, leaving it to future research to identify these patterns in identifiable neural circuits and their activities.

The scope of this paper is confined to that intermediate step. Broadly speaking, it gives us a *physiological* model, but not yet a *neurophysiological* one. Although this is only a small step towards the ultimate goal of those who seek to understand consciousness in

concrete neural terms, it is yet an important one, since it offers an objective description of the relationships in the brain on which the research needs to focus. In that sense, therefore, it can claim to have *tamed* the problem, even though it has not solved it. In addition, it removes the mystique from consciousness and answers fundamental questions about the mind-brain relation which do not depend on the neural details.

Although current academic interest lies mainly in the higher functions of our mental life, such as its role in language and social relationships, my analysis will additionally be confined to what, in line with the biological approach of Edelman (1989), I shall call the *primary* consciousness. That is to say, conscious awareness below the level at which verbal thought might make a contribution — dimensions of consciousness, therefore, which could exist also in creatures lacking a language, such as the neonate, the deaf-mute and nonhuman species. I believe this level of consciousness needs to be understood first. It is also important because it could conceivably exist in nonhuman species and might, therefore, have played a part in the evolution of the human faculty of consciousness. Moreover, since the model is formulated in causal and functional terms, it can also go some way towards meeting the growing interest of AI and robotics in a working model of consciousness.

The key hypotheses of the theory will be introduced in sections III and IV as propositions 1, 2 and 3 respectively. They explain the physical basis of consciousness in terms of three categories of internal representations, each accurately defined in causal and functional terms.

The difficulty of seeing the forest for trees

Much of the present state of confusion is due to the difficulty of seeing the forest for trees. Baars & Banks (1992) list no less than forty fields of investigation done under labels that imply such things as conscious experience, voluntary control or self-awareness. When writers in these different fields turn their mind to the phenomenon of consciousness as such, they naturally tend to see it through the prism of their own conceptual frames and may also be tempted to adopt the Procrustean solution of identifying consciousness with just those of its features to which they feel their field can make a contribution. Thus the editors of *Consciousness in Modern Science* (Marcel & Bisiach, 1988) observe in their introduction to this symposium that 'Sometimes it can be depressingly amusing to see scientists legislating on what is meant by a word' (p. 3).

The variety of views among scientists about the nature of consciousness is often paired also by radical differences about where consciousness is to be found. These may range from 'only in humans' to 'some animals', 'all animals', and 'all animate matter', right down to 'any system which interacts with the environment (hence thermostats, but not thermometers)'.¹ These questions are obviously of more than merely academic interest. In discussions about suffering in animals, for example, the question is bound to crop up whether they have consciousness.

In view of this confusing state of affairs, it is perhaps not surprising that many scientists shy away from the problem altogether, and some even view the existing literature with extreme scepticism: witness the concluding remarks of the entry under *Consciousness* in the *Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology* (ed. Sutherland, 1989): 'Nothing worth reading has been written on it.'

¹ Susan Blackmore, psychologist, University of the West at Bristol, in a lecture given in Cambridge in February, 1992.

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The qualia

Another source of confusion lies in the fact that consciousness can be viewed from either a *first-person* or *third-person* standpoint, only the latter being the proper standpoint of science. It is generally agreed that no scientific account of an experience can convey what it is actually like for the individual to have that experience, i.e. the raw feel of the experience, also called the 'qualia'. This was the main thrust of Nagel's seminal essay 'What is it like to be a bat?' (1974). It is sometimes concluded that subjective experience, therefore, lies altogether beyond the scope of scientific accounts. This is a mistake. Science is not in the business of *conveying* anything. That belongs to the ambitions of literature and the arts. The business of science is to explain what from a third-person standpoint appear to be the main features of the phenomena in which it is interested.

Seen from this standpoint, the main characteristics of the raw feel of an experience, be it a toothache or the taste of the milk, are its *intrinsicness*, *privacy* and *uniqueness*. And these characteristics, I shall suggest in Section IV, can be explained without difficulty by the model I shall propose.

By the *intrinsicness* of the raw feel is here meant the fact that it is an inalienable part of each and every conscious experience. The *privacy* lies in the fact that, strictly speaking, there is no way in which the hurtfulness of my pain can be conveyed to any other person. My words or demeanour may enable others to identify it with something they have experienced themselves or could imagine experiencing, but this still does not amount to an actual apprehension of what I feel. The *uniqueness* is no less characteristic. For, the 'what it feels like' to have a particular experience consists of the conscious components of the total impact or impression made by the event on the person, of its total effects on the organism.

What conditions a brain event must satisfy to enter consciousness, will be part of the present theory. The only point to be made here is that this total impact will be a subtle product of the subject's personal history, untraceable in its ramifications and historical origins. Indeed, strictly speaking, no two experiences are identical in their impact even on the same person, for that person will have changed in the interval between them.²

II: Key Dimensions of Conscious Awareness

The meaning of consciousness

Since consciousness is a fuzzy notion, it is particularly important that a methodical approach should begin by declaring what is to be meant by 'consciousness' for the purposes of the investigation. One cannot take it for granted (as even Freud did) that, since we all experience consciousness, the reader will know what you are talking about. Shared experiences do not guarantee shared conceptualisations. The assumption also ignores the difference between the first-person and third-person standpoint.

To start without bias and theoretical preconceptions, therefore, the best course is to turn to the dictionaries of the English language. Here we find consciousness fairly uniformly defined as *an awareness of the surrounding world, of the self, and of one's thoughts and feelings*. I shall take this definition, therefore, as a statement of the ground which a methodical scientific inquiry needs to cover. Even writers who are committed to a different notion of consciousness can hardly deny the relevance of these separate aspects. It could indeed be said that they would ignore any one of them only at their peril.

² In addition to explaining these three main characteristics of subjective experience, science could also explain some of the categories or similarities to which people resort when attempting to describe the quality of an experience, since these descriptions commonly take the form of a categorising reaction like 'horrible', or a comparison like 'it tasted like seawater'.

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Before we begin with the most comprehensive dimension of consciousness, viz., our awareness of the surrounding world, a few words need to be said about the awareness of self.

Awareness of self

'Awareness of self' can mean a multitude of things. At the lower end of the scale it could just mean an awareness of the body, of its posture and movements, of major physiological needs, like hunger or thirst, as well as other somatic variables, such as the stimuli that are felt as a pain. At the upper end it could mean much more, in the extreme case an ego-concept or self-image which covers major aspects of one's personality, including self-esteem.

For the purpose of this investigation we have to go beyond mere body-awareness for a reason which is intimately linked with the question of what is commonly understood by consciousness. I mean the fact that investigators commonly take a subject's ability to report a stimulus as proof that the subject is or was conscious of that stimulus. Now, every introspective self-report, such as 'I felt a tingle' or 'I saw a red flash' presupposes an internal representation of the fact that the event in question was part of the current state of the organism. In view of this important link with the common concept of consciousness, we shall, therefore, also include this dimension of self-awareness among the features which the theory needs to cover. In fact, it will play a major part in that theory.

Awareness of the surrounding world

It is clearly of advantage to living organisms if the brain can derive from its sensory inputs some kind of internal representation or *model* of the surrounding world which allows them to make predictions and informed behavioural decisions. Craik (1943) first formulated in modern terms that the behaviour of the higher orders of life can, in fact, be explained only on the assumption that they form such a model. Evidence for the existence of such models in many species has since become quite impressive (Gallistel, 1990).

In many animal experiments the available evidence proves only the existence of an internal representation of spatial relationships, of a cognitive *map*. In the human case the brain's model of the surrounding world obviously covers much more. The awareness that returns when you wake up in the morning covers not only the location of objects but also their properties and mutual relationships. You will know not only where the light switch is, but also what it does; you will know the effort required to get out of bed, to draw the curtains, to move the table or to lift the chair; you will know what is inside the wardrobe. However, this is not to say that all parts of the brain's internal model of the world are necessarily conscious. We are not usually conscious of everything the brain registers in a structured form. There is ample evidence (reviewed in Baars, 1988) of the effective operation in the brain of subliminal representations of various kinds. It is illustrated in everyday life by the sometimes remarkable powers of our intuition and by the things we come to do semi-automatically in well-practised routines, as in driving a car. This has also been confirmed in the laboratory. Pani (1982) has demonstrated that with practice a mental image used in a matching task may fade from consciousness, but return again when the task is made more difficult. Libet (1989) has shown that weak and only unconsciously detected stimuli can still be mentally effective.

Another division which needs to be respected is between the currently attended and unattended parts of a perceived situation. Thus we need to distinguish three representational levels here:

- 1) those parts of the brain's internal representations of the surrounding world which lie below the level of consciousness;
- 2) the conscious parts, which may in turn be divided into
 - (a) the currently attended fraction, which we may call the *foreground consciousness*, and
 - (b) the no less important remainder, or *background consciousness*, which covers the rest of your perception of the total situation. This remainder is no less important, for it forms part of the context in which the attended perceptions are evaluated. Thus I can keep my attention focused on my computer despite the knocking noise I hear, because my overall world model tells me that it is not a knock on the door, but just a workman busy on the floor below.

The empirical evidence

Little needs to be said in the human case about the empirical evidence for the existence and scope of the brain's internal representation of the surrounding world. For humans can report their perceptions. But even where self-reports may be suspect, or where language is lacking, as in the deaf-mute or young infants, there are other forms of evidence available. Valuable pointers, for example, spring from the fact that events which are covered by a subject's model of the world will be *expected* events, hence the limits of that model reveal themselves by the occurrence of events that are manifestly *unexpected* by the subject. Such occurrences tend to elicit characteristic reactions of 'surprise' which often have observable components, such as sudden shifts of attention. This fact, of course, is extensively used in the study of the development of visual perceptions in infants. The more unexpected an event, for example, the greater appears to be its power to attract the infant's attention. And the degree of that attraction can be gauged through the duration of the infant's gaze. Changes in heart rate or perceptible signs of distress may also occur.

Such investigations have shown that reality-mapping expectancies manifest themselves already at an early age. For example, infants as young as one month have shown surprise when they have seen a screen being slowly moved in front of a toy, and the toy is not there when the screen is subsequently removed (Bower, 1971).

Two characteristics of these internal representations

In the present context a clear distinction needs to be drawn between *symbolic* representations on the one hand, and *analogue* (or *isomorphic*) representations on the other. The latter map the relation structure of the represented objects (e.g. shape, depth, orientation, shading) and may also include representations of properties, e.g. representations of how the object would react if handled in one way or another. By definition, symbolic representations do none of this (e.g. the crown as symbol of royalty, and the word 'crown' as symbol of the object). Whereas symbolic representation clearly play a crucial role at the linguistic level of mental activity, the representations formed at the level of the primary consciousness in, for example, the visual perception of the surrounding world, are of a fully structured analogue character. We perceive objects as structured entities and in their mutual relationship.

Our visual perceptions have also a second characteristic which needs to be mentioned, and that is their *speculative* nature. Ambiguous figures, like the Necker Cube, or Wittgenstein's 'duck-rabbit', remind us that our visual perceptions are really of the nature of 'hypotheses' about what lies before our eyes (Gregory, 1970). And optical illusions tell us that what the brain accepts as a representation of an actual object or event, may, in fact, be a *misrepresentation*. Seeing is seeing *as*. Thus, the dim figure which, on a dark night,

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you take to be a man may, in fact, be a small tree. Although this is a misinterpretation, it still *functions* as a representation of what you see: you respond to it as being the figure of a man. Hence, the decisive factor which makes the activity of the set of neurons to which the brain here responds a *representation* of the perceived object, lies in the fact that it is *used* as such. Loosely speaking, we can take this to mean that the brain here looks at the activity of that set of neurons in finding a response that is correctly related to the nature of the object, given the goal the subject is currently set to pursue. To rephrase this in literal terms, I shall introduce the following functional definition in order to settle the sense in which 'internal representation' will be understood in the remainder of this paper:

Definition:

The activity of a set X' of neurons functions as an *internal representation* of an object (event, situation) X , if responses that need to be correctly related to the nature of X are processed in the brain as responses that need to be correctly related to the activity of X' .

By a 'correct relation' is here meant a relation which is conducive to a successful outcome of the response in question — given the nature of X and the goal of the response in question. For a formal analysis and definition of this class of 'directive correlations' see Sommerhoff (1974).

This indirect way of arriving at responses which match the nature of an external object, requires the operation of two kinds of feedback loops: those that permit the detection and correction of faulty representations, and those that do the same for faulty responses to the given representations. These are important considerations in the investigation of the neural networks involved in the representational functions of the brain.

The internal representation of relations

Since representations of features or properties of the environment need to include representations of *relations*, the question arises how relations can be represented in the brain, such as spatial or causal relations. This is easy to see if one draws on the fact that every relation between two or more entities can be conceived in logic as defining a set of ordered n -tuplets of entities: ordered pairs or triplets, for example. Thus, the relation *above*, as in *the light above the door*, defines a set of ordered pairs of which the first member has a higher spatial location than the second. Again, the relation *as in the spot between the eyes* defines a set of ordered triplets of a particular kind. It follows that such relations can be represented in the brain by *categorizing reactions*, that is to say, internal reactions which *generalize* over sets of sensory inputs that satisfy specific criteria. In the relation *above*, for example, among such criteria might be the fact that it needs an upward movement of the eyes to change fixation from the one object to the other.

Three main categories of representations

The hypotheses I shall presently propose revolve around three functionally distinct categories of internal representations, to be called categories A, B and C respectively. According to these hypotheses, the first two categories may be either conscious or unconscious, and the third mediates the difference.

Category A:

Representations of *actual* objects, events or situations, including their properties and relations, jointly amounting to a comprehensive representation of the current structure and properties of the surrounding world, of the organism's place in that world, and of the somatic parameters included in the body awareness.

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Category B:

Representations, not of actual objects, events or situations, but of merely *hypothetical* ones, such as the fictitious or absent objects, events, or situations which we can see 'in the mind's eye'.³

Important examples of this category are representations of the intended results of our actions. They play a part that may be broadly compared with the reference input to a feedback controlled servo-mechanism. Nor are they confined to human beings. Patently error-controlled activities in animals, too, suggest the presence of an internal reference frame representing the intended result of an activity (Bullock & Grossberg, 1988).

Category C:

Representations which relate to internal representations or individual stimuli, and represent the fact that these representations or stimuli are part of the current state of the organism.

We have already met these in an earlier context, viz., as prerequisites of introspective self-reports.

III: The Integrated Global Representation (IGR)*IGR: the concept of a comprehensive integrating system*

It stands to reason that an organism would benefit greatly if its brain could combine into a single, comprehensive and effectively integrated internal representation the different categories of representations and significant stimuli which are involved in the organism's apprehension of the overall situation to which it has to respond: a unified representation that could act as a single functional unit capable of producing behaviour suitably matching that situation. I shall call such a system an *Integrated Global Representation* or *IGR*.

It would cover internal representations of the surrounding world, of the body's place in the world, also of the body itself, such as posture and movement, plus representations relating to the internal state of the organism, including major physiological variables (e.g. hunger and thirst) and other internal stimuli of major significance (e.g. temperature and pain). All of these are representations of *actualities*, hence of category A. But it would be useful if the IGR were to cover also representations of *possibilities*, i.e. representations of category B, such as mental images of the changes in the current situation which the organism's actions aim to bring about or which are scanned as options. For they have a very obvious part to play in the production of appropriate behaviours. (The reader should be reminded here that throughout this discussion the term 'representation' is to be understood in the physical sense defined in Section II.)

Proposition 1:

An IGR in the form of comprehensive integrating system of the kind described above exists in the human brain, and it is one in which the integration of the relevant representations consists of a representation of their mutual relationship.

The evidence for this will be considered in the next section. The main point to be stressed here is that the IGR is to be conceived as a comprehensive configuration of neural events

³ The functional definition of 'internal representation' given earlier in this section can still be applied to this case if X is now construed as the set of features the mind seeks to integrate in a mental image, as when we imagine a unicorn or try to remember a past event.

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which can act as a single functional unit in the determination of the subject's behaviour via subservient executive mechanisms. Although this proposition covers only the *human* brain, in view of the very general benefits which the IGR confers, there is at least a presumption in favour of it existing also in nonhuman species.

To illustrate the type of integration specified in Proposition 1, we can look at the brain's internal representation of posture and movement as part of the body knowledge. Two categories of impressions are here known to be integrated: the interoceptive (proprioceptive, kinesthetic, labyrinthine) and the exteroceptive (tactile and visual).

Already early this century the importance for motor activities of an integration between these two sets of impressions had become appreciated (Head, 1920). The extent of this integration was in due course also established in the laboratory (Schilder, 1935).⁴ As we now know, their mutual calibration begins already soon after birth as the infant waves its arms about and learns to relate what it sees with what it senses internally (van der Meer *et al.*, 1995). The neural details of this integration, need not concern us here, beyond pointing out that the neural associations which are here being formed include *configurations of neural events which amount to an effective internal representation of the relationship between the interoceptive and exteroceptive impressions*. You can verify this by the simple observation that from the internal 'feel' of the body's posture when the eyes are closed you can predict what the eyes will see when they are opened again. The integrating relationships mentioned in Proposition 1 are assumed to have the same kind of structure *mutatis mutandis*.

Proposition 2:

In at least the human case, the dominant representation in the IGR is a representation of the current state of the organism: other representations or stimuli enter the IGR only through representations of the fact that they are part of the current state of the organism, i.e., through representations of category C.

According to this proposition, therefore, representations of category C are the dominant integrators, and representations of category A or B, for example, enter the IGR only to the extent to which they are coupled with the corresponding representations of category C. Some of the A- or B-representations currently operative in the brain could, therefore, be left out of the IGR. This will later prove to be an important point.

The existence of these representations of category C is demonstrated in human subjects in every case in which a subject reports a perceived or imagined event, as in 'I saw a bright light' or 'I imagined an accident'. As I pointed out when I highlighted this dimension of self-awareness: each such introspective self-report presupposes an internal representation of the fact the reported experience is or was part of the current state of the organism.

However, it does not follow that representations of category C must be lacking in creatures not possessing a language, although this may be much more difficult to demonstrate. For representations of this category can perform services other than just providing a neural basis for self-reports.

For example, an internal representation of the fact that a particular visual perception is part of the current state of the organism is also, in effect, a representation which identifies the viewpoint of that visual perception as being that of the organism. At the same time,

⁴ In this connection it is worth noting that the interoceptive components here appear to occupy the dominant position, and that the unity of the body appears to be represented at their level: if the afferent nerves from an arm are severed, the arm is experienced by the subject as a foreign object. The phenomenon of phantom limbs makes the same point.

it amounts to a representation of the link between the brain's model of the world and the world it models. These may be relationships which we take for granted in our own visual perceptions, but they still need a representation in the brain.

The same applies in the case of mental images: these, too, have always a single viewpoint. The respective representations of category C would identify this viewpoint as being that of the organism, while at the same time representing the link between those images and the subject entertaining them.

It can also be argued that representations of category C play a part in the control of attention, by which we shall here understand a selective process in the brain which enhances the relative influence of a particular set of inputs. Just as in vision the internal representation of the spatial relation between two objects offers the brain an internal reference frame for shifts of attention from the one to the other (e.g. in the control of the corresponding eye movements), so representations of category C can offer the brain an internal reference frame for switching attention from external objects to an internal object, as in the case of introspection.

It is not to be assumed, however, that representations of category C are the only integrating function performed by the IGR. One integration which the IGR could also perform profitably, would be a representation of the categorical relationship between representations of categories A and B, between representations of *actual* objects or events and representations of merely *imagined* ones. For there are many decisions which have to be appropriately related to the difference between them. In Section V we shall take a closer look at the relationship between these two categories at the physiological level.

IV: The Primary Consciousness and its Associated Categories of Mental Events

The concluding part of the main thesis

Proposition 3:

The IGR described in proposition 2 forms the physical basis of the primary consciousness and (at this primary level) of the kinds of awareness we have accepted as the defining features of consciousness, viz., an awareness of the surrounding world, of the self (as qualified in Section II), and of one's thoughts and feelings.

According to this proposition, therefore, the neural correlates of the current contents of consciousness consist of the current configuration of neural events through which the IGR is realised in the brain. *Whatever fails to enter the IGR, fails to appear in consciousness. In other words, for a brain-state to reach consciousness it needs to be covered by representations of category C.* Full allowance is thus made for the existence of effective, yet *unconscious*, internal representations of category A or B.

Although these propositions do not detail and identify the neural networks through which the IGR is realised in the brain, they do suggest in causal and functional terms what to look for in the search for those neural correlates of consciousness (see the box for a summary and schematic presentation of this model of the primary consciousness).

An interpretation of the main divisions of mental events

The neural basis of the main divisions of mental events⁵ can also be interpreted in terms of the three distinct categories of internal representations we have considered. Bearing in mind that, according to the present theory, internal events become conscious events only

⁵ In common with other writers, e.g. Marcell & Bisiach (1988), I mean by mental events exclusively *conscious* mental events.

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LEVELS OF INTEGRATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

According to the model, the main aspects of consciousness (awareness of the surrounding world, of the self, and of one's thoughts and feelings) can be modelled at the primary level by three categories of internal representations, each accurately definable in causal and functional terms. They are:

Category A: representations of actual objects, events, or situations;

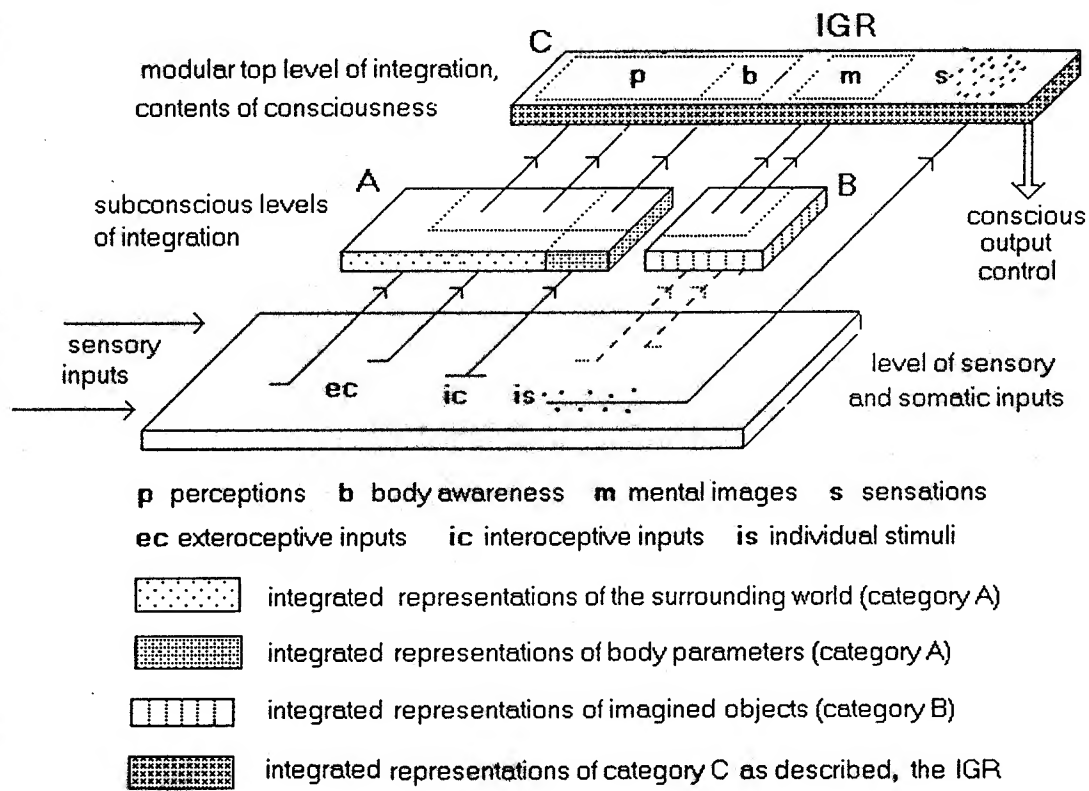
Category B: representations of imagined objects, events or situations, and

Category C: structures which combine these, plus sundry individual stimuli, into a fully integrated functional unit by way of representations of the fact that they are part of the current state of the organism. This is called the 'Integrated Global Representation' or 'IGR'.

The contents of IGR are the contents of the primary consciousness.

The 'raw feel' of a perception is the conscious component of the total impact made on the organism by the perception.

Two or more representations are said to be integrated if there exists an internal representation of their mutual relationships. The main levels:



Illustrating the 'Integrated Global Representation'.

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to the extent to which they have entered the IGR through representations of category C, the following interpretations are proposed in my model:

Sensations: stimuli which have entered consciousness by satisfying this condition.

Perceptions: those conscious parts of the brain's representation of the surrounding world which are currently contributed by the current sensory inputs.

Mental images: conscious representations of category B, not necessarily in the visual modality. Since this paper deals only with the primary consciousness, hence only with non-linguistic levels of representation, the only *thoughts* the theory covers consist of representations of this category (as when we try to figure out how to fit a carpet into a room, or visualise the possible consequences of an action).

Desires: mental images that elicit expectancies (not necessarily *articulated* in consciousness) of need satisfaction or of other pleasurable sensations.

Intentions: desires (as defined) which have taken control of actions in the form mental images of the goals to be achieved.

Voluntary acts: acts determined by intentions (as defined), hence by way of the IGR.

The will: A person's commitment to an intention.

Freedom of the will: the unimpeded ability of intentions (as defined) to control actions, or, as Quine has put it, the 'freedom to act as we will'. Note that this notion of a free will does not conflict with the assumption of causal determinism in the brain-events, nor with Libet's demonstration that voluntary decisions may be preceded by initiating unconscious processes.

Feelings: As has been said, it has always been a vexed question how the subjective quality or 'raw feel' of an experience, the qualia, can be represented in the physical brain: the 'what it is like' to be in pain or to taste the milk. The present theory offers a simple account of this aspect of conscious experience (already foreshadowed in Section I): *the raw feel of an experience consists of those components of the total impact which the experience makes on the subject which reach consciousness through being covered by the respective representations of category C*. What is here meant by 'total impact' and how this accounts for the privacy, intrinsicness and uniqueness of subjective experience has also been explained in Section I.

The 'subjective self': What is sometimes called the 'subjective self' may (as a conscious entity) be interpreted as the totality of the sensations, desires, images, intentions, thoughts etc., *including the associated feelings* (as defined).

*Points in support of this model*⁶

- In terms of representations of categories A, B and C, and the concept of the IGR, the model covers in general terms not only the brain processes underlying the main types of awareness which the word 'consciousness' denotes according to the dictionaries of the English language, but also the main divisions of mental events considered above and the subjectivity of conscious experience, the qualia. It also resolves the apparent antithesis between the notion of a free will and the causal determinism assumed for the brain.

⁶ The extensive ground this paper covers does not, unfortunately, leave space to compare this model with other models that have been proposed. It differs from all models known to me by its strict adherence to the methodical steps I have outlined in the first section, by its adherence to the dictionary definitions of 'conscious' in deciding the types of awareness that need to be covered, and by its specific definitions of terms like 'representation', 'IGR' and 'expectancy' (see below). The nearest concepts to my IGR would be the 'global workspace' of Baars (1988) and the 'global mapping' of Edelman (1989).

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- The existence of representations of categories A and B is beyond question in the human case, while introspective self-reports are proof of the existence in the human case also of representations of category C. Furthermore, the critical role which the theory attributes to this category in the constitution of consciousness accords with the common acceptance of reportability as proof of the consciousness of an experience.
- The phenomenon of *voluntary* actions, i.e. actions controlled by intentions, is proof, in the human case, that these contents of consciousness can operate as a coherent functional unit — or ‘supermodule’, if you like — in the organisation of behaviour. The suggestion that the integration required for this coherence is of the kind described by the propositions 1 and 2 above does, therefore, lie close at hand. The biological importance of this functional unit lies in the comprehensiveness of its informational base and that is precisely what the IGR provides.
- The general biological value of the IGR which I have explained earlier, can offer at least a partial explanation of the evolution of consciousness prior to the emergence of language. In this connection it is worth noting that, according to the present theory, *consciousness can be a matter of degree*, depending on how comprehensive and detailed the representations are in their respective categories. This is obviously relevant to the question of consciousness at different levels of the animal kingdom.
- The model goes some way towards meeting the need in psychology and psychiatry to understand the conditions a brain event must satisfy to enter consciousness.
- The model unites the variety of conscious experiences in the unity of self-consciousness and, through the IGR, in the unity of the physical organism.
- What philosophers call the characteristic ‘intentionality’ or ‘aboutness’ of mental events is covered by the representational as well directive character which the model attributes these events.

As has been explained, by virtue of its comprehensiveness the IGR clearly qualifies as a top-level of control in the determination of the organism’s behaviour. In this respect the model accords with the common notion of human consciousness as the highest level of the brain’s decision making machinery. However, ‘top-level’ is not here to be understood in an anatomical sense. Although the cerebral cortex must be heavily involved in the representations which the IGR encompasses, subcortical systems are also bound to play a part in its integrating processes. Hence the present theory does not encourage the notion of an anatomically circumscribed ‘seat’ of consciousness in the brain.

Observations first made by Libet and reviewed in Libet (1989) suggest for our model that entry into the IGR of an applied stimulus may involve a time lag of up to 0.5 sec., depending on its intensity and duration — this being the interval he observed between the application of a stimulus and the subject’s conscious awareness of it. A similar value has since been observed for perceptual integration times (Blumenthal, 1977).

V: The Composition of Representations of Category A, B and C

The three categories of representations which we have labelled A, B, and C were defined in primarily functional terms. The next step must be to consider the structure and composition of these representations in terms of configurations of neural events. Although the details and identification of these configurations in the brain is a distant goal well beyond the reach of the present enquiry, I suggest that one can still infer from general

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considerations quite a lot about them, albeit again of only a speculative nature. Any conclusions reached in this respect can serve as a valuable guide for the vast body of research that will still be needed to complete the process. I shall begin with the brain's internal representation of the surrounding world, i.e. representations of category A. In some sense they must 'mirror' the properties of that world. But in what form is this actually realised in the brain?

When Hubel and Wiesel (1965) discovered cells in the visual cortex (first of the cat and later in monkeys) which were selectively responsive to optical primitives, like blobs, bars, orientations and movement, it was the beginning of a movement which saw the future of the physiology of vision in the further exploration of such cortical 'feature detectors' — or 'feature extractors', as they are also called. The seminal work of Marr (1982) further reinforced this trend by suggesting computational paradigms for a whole hierarchy of such neural detectors.

The main problem with neural feature detectors in the form of cells which are selectively responsive to particular environmental features, is that they merely *signal* the presence of those features. This would be useless to the brain unless it were coupled with representations of the *nature* of the features concerned, e.g., their physical character and behavioural relevance. In other words, considered individually, the outputs of the feature detectors are no more than *symbolic* representations of those features, and they would be useless unless coupled with representations of the *meaning* of those symbols. This is the well known 'symbol grounding problem'. It cannot be evaded by regarding the low-level symbols as mere components of symbols higher up the hierarchy. Neither can it be assumed that, once a feature detector has been formed, the behavioural relevance of that feature will be learnt in due course. Because the brain's power to discriminate environmental features generally develops in response to experiences of their behavioural relevance, and not *vice versa*.

These problems can be avoided by a biological approach which begins at the opposite end, viz., with basic considerations about the uses to which the brain's model of the world is put and how in practice it may come to be formed and kept up to date. So I shall start at that end.

The brain's internal representation of the surrounding world amounts to an interpretation of the sensory inputs which may have innate components, but in the higher organisms is mainly based on experience, thus endowing these organisms with a greatly enhanced adaptability. Beginning with the infant's first explorations of space, the individual discovers the properties of the external world empirically through the experienced consequences of his or her actions, in short, through act-outcome experiences, plus other what-leads-to-what experiences, such as those that occur in the mere observation of external sequences of events. Through observation the child learns how to open a door or light a candle. To the extent to which these what-leads-to-what experiences are dictated by the features or properties of the external world they are also a reflection of those features or properties. The same applies to the what-leads-to-what *expectancies* which the what-leads-to-what *experiences* may in due course generate. Thus the weight of an object can be represented in the brain by the expected effort to lift it, its hardness by the expected effort to deform it, its temperature by the expected sensation when it is touched.

Since this is the brain's natural way of acquiring structures which 'mirror' the features or properties of the external world, one is bound to ask what part these acquired what-leads-to-what expectancies may play in the actual composition of the brain's internal representation of the surrounding world. That they indeed play *some* important part is put beyond question by the fact that the only way in which the brain empirically

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discovers gaps or errors in its model of the world is through the occurrence of *unexpected events*; and the further fact that the brain is known to react to such occurrences in characteristic ways designed to initiate remedial actions, e.g. by shifts of attention to the area concerned in search for further information (see below). In the cortex the so-called 'P300' waves are known to correlate with something that is surprising, i.e. unexpected (Crick, 1994).

In view of these considerations, the notion of a state of expectancy needs to be given an objective definition to show up its physiological implications.

Definition:

By a *state of expectancy* for an event X we shall mean a (conscious or unconscious) state of the brain which is characterised by two components:

a) it is a state of *readiness* for X, by which is here meant a state which facilitates or advances an appropriate response to X; and

b) it is a state in which a *failure* of X to occur elicits a tendency to initiate a corrective action in the form of what Pavlov had called a 'what is it? reflex' and others a 'surprise reaction', but what has since become technically known as an *orienting reaction*.⁷

These orienting reactions of the brain may range from merely a fleeting shift of attention, such as a passing glance of the eyes, at the one extreme, to arousal and startle responses at the other. Physiological components of orienting reactions may include changes in pupillary size, breathing, heart rate and electrical skin conductivity. Nor are they an inevitable consequence of an unexpected event, since the extent to which the brain will allow some unexpected input to divert it from the task in hand must depend on the relevance of the event to that task. The orienting pressure has to be balanced against the task pressure.

In simple terms we can picture the development of these mechanisms during infancy by assuming that orienting tendencies are the naive brain's original response to all events. In the beginning the infant is surprised by everything. In due course these reactions become selectively inhibited through the more appropriate reactions which come to replace them as the subject becomes familiarised with the conditions under which the events occur. Eventually, therefore, only unfamiliar sequences of events will continue to elicit them.

Acquired expectancies in representational roles

It is important to realise how vast is the range of physical features or properties that can be represented by what-leads-to-what expectancies. At the lower levels of the hierarchy, for example, the physical topography of the retina can be represented in terms of expectancies about the eye movements required to shift retinal stimuli from one retinal location to another; and the shape of a contour can be represented by expectancies about the eye movements required to track it, or to jump from one salient point to another. At the upper levels the range extends as far as any actions we are able to execute which have observable consequences: from testing the elasticity of a rubber band, to determining the mass of an atomic particle in the most elaborate of scientific procedures.

⁷ In the sense in which this term is now widely used, and also here, it covers also subliminal reactions.

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Cortical responses which correspond to expected events were first demonstrated by Walter (1964). In these trials the brain was habituated to a pair of tones occurring in sequence. When the second tone was then omitted, a contingent negative variation was recorded in the cortical potentials at the time when that tone was due.

Taking into account both the range of features or properties which can be represented by acquired expectancies, and the fact that expectancies form the basis of mismatch signals in the form of the occurrence of unexpected events, the conclusion is hard to resist that *the main body of the brain's internal representations of the external world actually consists of the totality of acquired what-leads-to-what expectancies (conscious or unconscious) which the current sensory inputs elicit or sustain*. For brevity I shall call this the *Expectancy Theory*.

Consider, for example, the perception of distance — say, the distance of some perceived object. The physical dimension and behavioural relevance of that external variable can here be represented by several kinds of expectancies, e.g. expectancies relating to the movements required to bridge that distance, the motion parallax to be experienced in a movement of the head, to the changes in apparent size when the object is approached, and the vergence required in fixating it. It follows that a cortical 'distance detector' consisting of a cell which is selectively responsive to objects at that given distance, would cease to be a meaningless signal or symbol if its activity occurred as part of a much larger complex of neural events, namely, neural events representing the set of expectancies I have just listed.

The Expectancy Theory has been advanced above only as a hypothesis about the composition of representations of category A. But it applies equally well to representations of category C. The fact that some particular representation or stimulus is part of the current state of the organism (and not the environment) has consequences for any response the brain may make to that representation or stimulus. Hence a representation of that fact could be composed of the corresponding what-leads-to-what expectancies.

The theory also offers an elegant and economical explanation of the composition of representations of category B, i.e. representations of *imagined* objects, events, or situations.

For this explanation we have to return to the definition of a state of expectancy for an event X, given earlier in this section. This listed two critical components: (a) a state of readiness for the occurrence of X, and (b) the tendency towards an orienting reaction if X failed to occur.

Next, consider the conclusion first (I believe) reached by Neisser (1976) about the difference between *seeing* and *imagining*: 'To imagine something that you know to be unreal, it is only necessary to detach your visual readiness from your general notion of what will really happen and embed them in a schema of a different sort.' This points straight to the suggestion that representations of category B involved in *imagining* an object differ in the following way from those of category A involved in *seeing* an object: whereas the body of a representation of *actual* objects or events consists of states of expectancy in the full sense of the two components mentioned in our definition of states of expectancy, representations of merely *imagined* objects or events consist of states having only the first of those two components, i.e. they are states of *readiness*, but not *expectancy*, for a sensory experience. One could also have inferred this simply from the fact that mental images are not checked against current visual inputs, and are, therefore, disconnected from the surprise mechanisms. The full force of this hypothesis has been discussed elsewhere (Sommerhoff, 1991). With only limited space at my disposal, I shall

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merely add that it casts a new light on a fact revealed in modern brain scans, viz., that mental images activate broadly the same cortical areas as vision.

I still have to mention a gap that needs to be filled in the idea of acquired expectancies acting as representations. What-leads-to-what expectancies are *conditional* expectancies in the sense of expectancies about what *would* happen *if* such or such an action were undertaken, or what *would* follow *if* such or such an event occurred. Act-outcome expectancies, for example, are configurations of neural events which become effective *if* the respective act is contemplated or initiated. However, if such acquired act-outcome expectancies are to function as effective representations of some feature or property of the world, they must be effective also in circumstances in which those particular acts are not contemplated or initiated. After you have discovered the temperature of an object by touch, a representation of that discovery, i.e. the expected sensation if touched again, must be available in your brain as a representation of that temperature regardless of whether you intend to touch the object again.

To take another example: the fact that the shape of a figure can be represented by expectancies about the eye-movements needed to track its contour, need not imply that a shape can only be recognised by actually tracking its contours. In other words, the brain needs networks which enable acquired *conditional* expectancies to become *unconditional* ingredients of the brain's model of the world. For simple networks that might do the trick, see Sommerhoff and MacDorman (1994).

The full explanatory powers of the Expectancy Theory

- The theory offers the most economical explanation of the role that failed expectancies play as error signals for the brain's model of the world.
- The range of possibilities that exists in hierarchies of acquired what-leads-to-what expectancies can obviously accommodate representations of a vast range of different features or properties of the surrounding world, including features never before experienced in the history of the species. In other words, the theory satisfies what Wittgenstein (1953) has called the 'condition of adequate logical multiplicity'.
- The direct link between visual perception and self-induced movements which the theory envisages, can explain such well known facts as the critical importance of self-induced movements in the early development of the visual system; in the adaptive changes that occur in the visual system when the optics are altered, e.g. when inverting prisms are fitted to the eyes of a subject; and in the way in which the brain maintains the representation of a stable scene as the eyes move in their sockets by taking into account information about the eye movements concerned. You can readily check that it takes into account only information relating to *self-induced* movements: if the eye ball is moved passively, e.g. by pressing it with the thumb, the scene dances about.
- Since the totality of what-leads-to-what expectancies elicited by the sensory inputs in a given situation may also contain conscious or unconscious expectancies of need satisfaction, the theory also covers the *appetitive* significance that perceived objects, events, or situations may have for the perceiver.
- The theory may cast additional light on what is known as the *binding problem*, the awkward problem posed by the fact that an object's different features — its colour, shape and motion, for example — may be processed in different parts of the brain (Zeki, 1993). So how does the brain combine them again? As Crick (1994) has put it: 'we can see how the brain takes a picture apart, but not how it puts it together

again'. Since an object's features move in unison, i.e. maintain their mutual relationships, when the object moves in the field of vision, their being bound together in the same object can be represented in the brain by the corresponding what-leads-to-what expectancies.

- The theory has no difficulty with the symbol grounding problem, nor with a number of aspects of vision that used to be very awkward for computational interpretations until PDPs and artificial neural networks came along, such as the importance of similarities and generalisations in our recognition of objects (expectancies can be more or less specific), the speculative nature of our visual perceptions (seeing is seeing *as*) and the phenomena of visual completions across scotomata and the blind spot.
- The main learning capacities which our theory demands of the brain are of a kind that has already been extensively investigated in both human and animal behaviour, namely, the capacity to derive what-leads-to-what expectancies from what-leads-to-what experiences.
- The theory does not deny the importance of cortical 'feature detectors' such as those found in the visual cortices. It sees a possible role for them as nodes to which sets of simultaneously elicited expectancies are attached as part of a meaningful representations of the features concerned.
- Since there are generally several ways in which an external variable may be represented in what-leads-to-what expectancies, the theory allows for the high degree of redundancy in the cognitive processes of the brain (Sperry, 1987).
- The theory accommodates both egocentric and allocentric cognitive maps, depending on the reference points of the what-leads-to-what expectancies that map the spatial relations concerned.
- Finally, the theory opens a new perspective on the difference between the neural events involved in *seeing* an object and *imagining* it (see above).

That acquired expectancies could have a cognitive role was first suggested by Tolman (1948) to explain the cognitive maps which rats acquire in learning a maze. But in the behaviourist climate of the times the notion of expectancy came to be widely rejected as too *mental* a concept. After the decline of behaviourism it was only sporadically revived, and, until the arrival of PDPs and artificial neural networks, the cards were stacked against it by the difficulty of accommodating the notion of acquired expectancies in the computational approaches which had begun to steal the show. Owing to their learning capacities, the artificial neural networks are better placed in this respect. But, to the best of my knowledge, they have not so far been exploited for the simulation of the cognitive potential of acquired states of expectancy in the sense in which I have defined these states. And even if such attempts were made, the simulation of *hierarchies* of such expectancies will prove to be an exceptionally hard nut to crack. Nor have I encountered in other models of internal representations a notion of expectancy in the two-pronged physiological sense adopted in this section.

Although the value of testing theories through computer simulation is beyond question, it hardly needs to be said that an exclusive addiction to such simulations will be counterproductive in the long run if it results in a neglect, or even rejection, of theories which are difficult to simulate, such as the one that has been advanced in this section.

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Concluding remarks

I have argued that consciousness can be stripped of its mystique, and the mind-brain relation clarified, if the methodical scientific approach is followed which was described in Section I. Consciousness may then be seen in objective terms as a faculty of the brain which resides in certain comprehensive integrating functions being performed in the representational operations of the brain.

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